Forgotten Fights

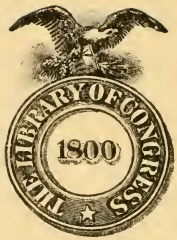
OF THE

A. E. F.

IRVING EDWIN PUGH

AND

WILLIAM F. THAYER



Class D570

Book .2

Copyright No. P7

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

Forgotten Fights of the A. E. F.

BY

IRVING EDWIN PUGH
AND
WILLIAM F. THAYER

Seven Battlefront Maps

Boston
The Roxburgh Publishing Company
Inc.

D570
.2
.P7

Copyrighted 1921
By IRVING EDWIN PUGH
All Rights Reserved

AUG 18 1921
©Cl. A624002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

The preparation of any historical work is fraught with many and great difficulties, at best, and this work has proved itself exceptionally so. The greatest difficulty was, of necessity, encountered in the bringing together of the material from official sources which could be relied upon for the making of the work absolutely authentic and trustworthy, and so it was that the majority of the material and information which is embodied in this work was gathered personally by the authors, while in active service with the American forces in France and Germany. The outstanding points of the battles mentioned are absolutely accurate and a matter of official record, and have been woven into the fabric of the story by the interspersion of personal details and impressions as to make the whole readable as well as authentic.

In the preparation of this work, we have of necessity, called in several others, who have rendered us highly valuable services both in the writing and preparation of the work for the press, and it is to those persons that we extend, herewith, our sincere thanks for their part in the making of the series a success thus far.

We find ourselves indebted to several former soldiers who rendered valuable aid in

the gathering of the details; to official sources for operation reports of the divisions mentioned; to "The Stars and Stripes" for poems quoted; and more especially, to Miss Elizabeth Mary Ellingham, who has given untiringly of her time and experience in the technical preparation and the corrections of the structure of the original manuscripts, and to whom we feel especially indebted, as this work was both tedious and arduous.

THE AUTHORS.

DEDICATORY.

Throughout the preparation of this work, I have felt myself under the constant influence of one who has never failed to give me the unstinted aid and encouragement without which it would have been well nigh the impossible to attempt setting forth the story of our operations overseas. The writing of any historical work is very tedious and exacting to say the least, much more so, that of history so recent as that of 1918, and it was only by the constant careful attention and tender solicitude that the work has reached its consummation in the present volume.

This one has ever been present at my side in the re-reading and corrections of the text; the tedious and boresome duties of getting the touch of the soldier into the tale of the historian; the tramping again through the forest wastes of Villers-Cotterets or the storming of the Bellicourt tunnel; ever assisting, just at the opportune moment with some little touch of realism or pathos or the description of some bit of French countryside, which had lost its individuality in the maze of history notes, (for she has likewise been to La Patrie and has lent the artist touch to the bare tale of the soldier-historian. She it is who has been the inspiration and

guide through the otherwise boresome tangle of official details and piles of communiques and maps.

She is sitting at my side as I write these words, and to my wife I dedicate the story which she has helped me prepare.

IRVING EDWIN PUGH.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

I	Cantigny: America's First Chance.
II	With the Second Division on the Paris-Metz Highway.
III	When the Yanks Came.
IV	Beginning of the Great July Counter.
V	The Second Division at Vierzy and in the Foret de Villers-Cotteret.
VI	The "Yankee" Division Holds the Pivot at Bouresches.
VII	With Our Second Corps at the Hindenburg Line.
VIII	The Yankee Soldier.
IX	To Our Dead!

FORGOTTON FIGHTS OF THE A. E. F.

INTRODUCTORY.

The annals of the Great European War are so replete with the tales of heroism of the fighting men of the several Allied Nations that there seems nothing left to add, although the true story of how these several million or more heroes died may, perhaps, never be fully known, for each one of them died with his story untold, and the same shell-burst that snuffed out his life ended forever the probability of the world,—to say nothing of his comrades,—ever knowing just what impelled him to the Great Adventure.

Every crater upon the shell-torn fields of Flanders; every tree whose withered arms moan in the winds that sweep across those desolate wastes of Picardy; every muddy stream and rivulet that winds between the poplars and vineyards of Champagne; every solitary cross that marks the final "Blighty" of some unknown and unsung hero;—all these things serve but as grim reminders of the mighty conflict, and as the

"Footprints on the Sands of Time,"

that point the way that the martyrs of

Humanity and Democracy have trod, torn and bleeding, weary and worn, starving and delirious.

These are only passing landmarks, as it were, of the great epic of Freedom; the milestones along the desolate and barren way along which the Armies of Justice and Liberty and Freedom have marched to Victory; the second Calvary, upon which the Prince of Peace, once more reviled and scourged by his oppressors, has passed,—to His Golgotha, to be sure,—but, beyond the pain and anguish of the cross; beyond the sting of the blows of the scourge; beyond the darkness and gloom of the tomb, like the Man of Sorrows, the Martyrs of Freedom have caught the vision of the Holy City; have realized that their sacrifice will be rewarded, and their anguish and pain have not been suffered in vain. Just as the Master, riding triumphantly into the Jerusalem of old, caught there the vision of Gethsemane and dark shadow of Calvary, just so have the heroes of Flanders and Picardy, of the Marne and of the Aisne, of Saint Mihiel and of the Argonne caught the vision of the Holy City where they shall be once more united with those for whom they died; shall pass in review before the King of Kings and Lord of the Ages,—the Great Commander, their White Comrade, and hear Him say, "Well done, enter into rest."

Such is the vision that we who have come safely through the hell of the trenches and

have been spared to fulfill our mission in the world of Peace, have caught as the star-shells of the Boche burst in the midnight air, and flooded the narrow trenches with their effulgency; and as we emerge again from the great maelstrom of fighting and death, we feel the greatest blessing that a soldier can feel,—the knowledge of a duty well done.

It has been a really wonderful Adventure for us, and we hope only to prove ourselves worthy of the brave laddies that we have left sleeping on the distant shores of France, where:

"In Flanders Fields the poppies blow,
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing fly."

Their voices are calling to us, even now, as we return to the land for which they died; to the land that shelters and protects those they loved; to the land that gave them birth, and like a mother cuddled them to her bosom, that in her hour of direst need, they might be strong and fit to take up her quarrel, and to protect her; to the land for which they so manfully went forth to die, and so bravely laid down their lives upon the shell-swept plains of Flanders and through the trackless wastes of the Argonne. Their voices call to us:

"If ye break faith with we who die,
We shall not sleep, tho' poppies grow
In Flanders Fields."

Many are the pæans of victory and the shouts of the multitude of free voices that are raised to acclaim the heroes and the victors, as they come marching proudly home, with their battle-honored banners waving in the summer breezes of their native land; hark to the loud acclamations of love and joy as "those who waited" welcome the returned boy-veterans of the greatest war the world has ever seen! See the manly pride and youthful fervor and enthusiasm of the laddies, as they swing along down the broad avenue to the martial music of the bands. There are triumphal arches erected all along the line of march, bearing witness to the pride and love of the Nation for her valiant sons; the papers are full of the praises of the heroes of the fighting armies, which have covered themselves with glory in the great conflict.

And, to-day, friends, if you were to enter the town of Coblenz on the Rhine, you would be thrilled with pride as your eyes fell upon the flash of color that fitfully waves from the heights of castle-crowned Ehrenbreitstein. Ehrenbreitstein the proud; Ehrenbreitstein the haughty; Ehrenbreitstein the impregnable; Ehrenbreitstein the symbolic crystallization of Prussia's boasted security and brute strength; Ehrenbreitstein, the mightiest of all that "watch on the Rhine!" It was indeed the embodiment of all that the proud Germans could boast and say to all the world: "Ehrenbreit-

stein shall stand forever,—as shall also our mighty German Empire!"

But, to-day, in solemn pride and grandeur, high up on the lofty sides of the rock-bound shores of the Rhine; high above the highest towers of the mighty fortress; flinging its folds triumphantly and majestically over the Rhineland valleys and vine-clad hillsides; telling the world, in accents that cannot be mistaken, that the days of monarchies are indeed slipping as the sands of the seas, flies the glorious folds of your flag and my flag. And it is a different flag, to many of us, too, for its shining stars and its field of blue are drawn from the highest heavens, symbolizing that our guidance is Divine, and that its stars shall shine, in undiminished luster until the stars in heaven fade and cease to shine; its stripes of white are the symbolization of the purity and fidelity of our sacred American womanhood, which so many of our heroes have died to keep unsullied by the lawless and ruthless march of the violators of Belgium and France; and its red stripes, are no longer red only, for they are dyed a deeper crimson by the sacred life-blood of seventy-thousands of our immortals, who silently keep their watch in Flanders fields.

We cannot forget! We must not forget! We will never forget that the German armies stand defenseless before the supreme bar of Justice, and that there is no one who will besmirch his honor or good name in their defense! Their hands are red with the blood

of murdered and maimed and broken childhood of Belgium and France! Childish hands, which they, in their mad greed for power and their place in the sun, have cut off, still cry aloud for vengeance! Womanhood, that most sacred of all estates, which they have ruthlessly trampled in the mire and filth of bestiality which only a Hun could dare think of, cries aloud against its oppressors. Ruined towns and peasant cots, torn and bruised and crushed by the heel of the invader, raise their black ruins to heaven and pray that Heaven shall send the grasses and flowers to cover the scars left behind in the path of the vandals. No! No! We shall NEVER forget that the German nation is defenselessly guilty of these and other crimes too vulgar to mention; and we who have witnessed their works and have seen with our own eyes the great Hun machine at its worst, grinding out its grist of death and destruction and suffering, shall never forget what they have done! We have not come through the fires of hell and the surging of the mighty hosts locked in deadly conflict, to put our flag on Ehrenbreitstein for a few short hours of "tinselled triumph," but to see to it, that, from this day forth, NEVER shall the German nation be trusted as she has been in the past! She has forfeited every right to consideration among the councils of the civilized nations of the world; she has proved herself a wolf and a roaring lion, running wild throughout the

earth "seeking whom she may devour." She has set up her standard as the murderer of children, the despoiler of womanhood, the scourge of all that is high and holy and pure and good. She has broken her faith with those who considered her their friend, and has boasted that all agreements between nations are but "scraps of paper" which she shall destroy at her own will and pleasure, in order that she may carry out her plan of world dominion! NO! NEVER more will Germany stand within the circle of civilized nations! We cannot forget! We must not forget! We WILL not forget!

"Between its crag-ribbed summits
And ruined castles gray,
Between its clambering vineyards
And orchards white with May,
The rushing Rhine rolls seaward,
And hard by Coblenz town,
A flag on Ehrenbreitstein
Upon that tide looks down.

We have not brought that banner
Thro' storms of gas and lead,
Thro' your shell-swept leagues of trenches
That are mounded with our dead
For a tinsel hour of triumph
Above the ancient Rhine,
But to leave you for the future
A warning and a sign.

You may bask you in your legends
Of Niebelungen lore;
Of the mighty strokes of Siegfried
And the hammer strokes of Thor:
But drink no more the potion
Of gods and super-men,
Or the flag on Ehrenbreitstein
Will cross the seas again."

IRVING EDWIN PUGH
WILLIAM F. THAYER

CHAPTER I.

America's First Chance: The Fight at Cantigny.

"It is possible that in those ancient years when Rome was crumbling before the attacks of the barbarians from beyond the Rhine, or when western Gaul was trembling beneath the armies of Attila, the civilized world of the time may have felt itself as gravely threatened with destruction as did modern civilization during the months of April, May and June, 1918, when once again the Huns, as always through the ages, the assailants of the higher types of human development, were making their supreme effort to crush the armies of the Allies upon the soil of France. But never in past eras, certainly, was the stake involved for humanity so vast, so world-embracing, and never did the outcome of a supreme struggle seem to hang more perilously in the balance."

So has written a historian of the recent war, and surely no more truly has anyone ever before written!

Things were hanging in the balance during those three fateful months of 1918, for the German Army on the Western Front, now almost twice its former size, due to reinforcement from the collapsed Russian front; its troops armed and trained to perfection,

and animated by the assurance of speedy and glorious success, opposing the armies of France and England, "doggedly determined still, but sorely worn and tried through nearly four years of ceaseless battle and cruelly battered by the plunges of the enemy in his spring offensive."

The gravity of the crisis was startingly apparent—something must be done, and that quickly! There was but one factor, which, although there was an element of uncertainty, might serve to throw the scales in favor of the Allies, and that factor was as yet wholly untried.

The enemy was driving a wedge between the British and French armies, and were attempting to smash their way through to the Channel ports, striking through the lines just west of Amiens, as well as another operation against the British in the vicinity of Kemmel Hill, in Belgium. The enemy smash was completely overrunning all weight of resistance which the war-worn Allies could throw in in their vain effort to stem the tide of invasion. Within eight short days after launching their mighty attack, the enemy had completely enveloped the Somme battle-fields, and had smashed through the lines of the Allied armies for a gain of about fifty or more kilometers. It seemed as if the fall of Amiens was imminent, and, with that city, the railway facilities centered there. Then, too, the gigantic proportions of the enemy offensive was tearing great gaping

holes in the ranks of the Allied reserves, and the battle that was fast developing gave promise of soon placing the Allied armies in a very grave position. Accordingly, the Allies turned to America.

The advancing hordes of the enemy were everywhere victorious. In numbers of fighting men, guns, experience and morale, they had the edge on the Allies. Their forces had been constantly assembling in the Western theatre for the great attack that should end the war before America could bring her power and fresh reserves of men to bear upon their blows. Germany's pick of men, coupled with a choice selection of her best bets in generalship, and the whole machine backed with an experience extending over more than three years of such warfare, had been assembled for one last supreme spurt for the goal.

The enemy's initial blow had fallen powerfully at the point of junction of the French and British forces, and, somewhat late in the great struggle that had torn Europe to shreds for over three years, the Allies saw clearly, and for the first time, that there must be built up a more co-ordinate working of their armies if they should hope to gain the victory.

The gravity of this situation resulted in a conference being called at Abbeville, on May 2, 1918, and, after much discussion, Marshal Foch was chosen as Allied Commander-in-Chief, the terms of this conference being stated as follows:

"General Foch is charged by the British, French and American Governments with the co-ordination of the action of the Allied armies on the western front; to this end there is conferred on him all the powers necessary for its effective realization. To the same end the British, French and American Governments confide in General Foch the strategic direction of military operations.

"The Commander-in-Chief of the British, French and American armies will exercise to the fullest extent the tactical direction of their armies. Each Commander-in-Chief will have the right to appeal to his Government, if in his opinion his army is placed in danger by the instructions received from General Foch.

(Signed) G. CLEMENCEAU
PETAIN
F. FOCH
LLOYD GEORGE
D. HAIG, F. M.
HENRY WILSON
TASKER H. BLISS
JOHN J. PERSHING."

There were, at the time of the Great German Offensive of March 21st, 1918, in France, approximately 300,000 American troops, of which number, only a force of about four combat divisions could be available in the crisis. These four were: the 1st and 2nd, who were then in line, and the 26th and 42nd, who had just recently finished their first

month's trench training. As a necessary part of their training in the trenches, some of these divisions had taken part in local combats,—the most notable being at Seicheprey, on April 20th, by the 26th Division,—but as yet, not one of them had been in battle as an integral fighting unit.

Accordingly, the 26th and 42nd Divisions at once took over quiet sectors to release veteran divisions for the great battle; the 26th relieving the 1st Division, which was ordered to the sector northwest of Paris, to take up reserve positions; the 42nd relieving two French divisions from their quiet sectors in Lorraine.

On April 25th, 1918, the 1st American Division received orders to relieve two French divisions before the town of Cantigny, lying in a sector, slightly northwest of Montdidier and about twenty-five kilometers southeast of Amiens,—in other words, at the very apex of the gigantic enemy wedge, driven there by their March Offensive, nearly severing the Allied lines. Amiens was still in danger, and there could be but one question uppermost in the minds of all of the Allied forces,—could the Americans hold? If they did not, all was lost; if they did, as the Allies firmly believed they would, then the dawn of the day of glory had begun to break.

Immediately upon entering the sector fronting Cantigny, the 1st Division was subjected to more intense defensive operations and raids than they had ever yet experienced.

Artillery fire was thrown upon them in deluges, night and day, while the enemy maintained frequent and annoying raiding tactics. But the Yankee doughboys came back, with all the vim and vigor and tenacity of their race, and it was not long until they had recognized the presence in their front of the 271st and 272nd Regiments of German infantry, with average strengths per company of about 150 men,—some of the best troops of the enemy forces at this time.

It soon developed that to hold the sector at this point would not suffice, for the strongly fortified and well-organized town of Cantigny, standing on rising ground ahead of the 1st Division, was affording the enemy admirable observation points which overlooked the American lines and rear areas. Furthermore, it presented a highly favorable position from which the enemy might advance in any further assaults he might send forward.

Cantigny faced the Yanks, out there across No Man's Land, and, in order to make the Allied positions safe and to afford a favorable "jumping-off" place for a possible Allied counter-offensive, should the chance come, Cantigny must be taken. Accordingly, preparations were begun at once.

For this attack, the 28th Infantry was chosen, with the 26th Infantry furnishing one battalion for the support, and a number of French tanks and flame-projectors.

Officially, the preparations for this operation are stated as follows: "A section of

terrain behind the American lines very similar in natural features to that occupied by Cantigny and its defenses, was selected for maneuvering, and trenches in replica of the enemy trenches were dug upon it. Sand tables showing the topography, woods, lines of change of the barrage, objectives, strong points, and all houses in Cantigny which might be expected to be organized as machine gun nests were prepared and carefully studied. Exact and detailed orders were prepared by the staff and the artillery arranged, accurately, time tables for the preliminary bombardment and the rolling barrage."

So much for the preliminary preparation for the attack.

And then came the night of May 27th-28th; and morning saw the enemy going over the top along the Chemin des Dames, in what was later destined to prove itself the last of their great offensives, and which carried their lines down to the Marne at Chateau-Thierry and threatened Paris with imminent attack.

Zero hour for the Cantigny attack came on the morning of May 28th, at the usual time,—5.30, just as the first faint streaks of coming day lighted up the flaming front lines. The attacking units were accompanied by a dozen French tanks and the flame-throwers were in position, the flying units were ready for their part in the observation, and the engineers were likewise ready for their pioneer

work. Furthermore, approximately 250 pieces of artillery (75 mm to 280 mm) were ready to open the show at the appointed second.

The night was calm and starlit, and promptly at the zero hour, the artillery barrage began its work with a roar, and a hail of missiles crashed down upon Cantigny. Great, jagged, painful, and gaping holes began to appear in its walls and roofs, and its buildings flew into jagged splinters, and clouds of flying brick and stone-dust. This terrific fire paralyzed the enemy, and when, at half-past six, the fire ceased as drum-fire, and became the rolling barrage, for the infantry attack, advancing at the rate of 100 meters every two minutes, with the infantry following at the distance of fifty meters behind the barrage, the enemy was so bewildered that he could put up but comparatively little resistance.

"Mastered by the bayonets of the American infantry and terrified by the tanks and flame-throwers, the enemy surrendered in clusters, those who attempted to fight being shot down or taken, as the rush of assaulting troops mopped up the town and its covering trenches." That is the way one of those who was upon the ground at the time put the story of the fight.

Shortly after the launching of the attack the objective line beyond Cantigny was reached and this with only slight losses. It then, of course, became necessary to con-

solidate and hold the gains, against severe enemy counter-battery fire, which was beginning to fall upon our newly-won positions, in a devastating and withering barrage. It also developed that the enemy would attempt a counter-attack at once, and in order to hold the positions it was necessary to secure them at once, this work being accomplished by connecting a series of shell-holes by a system of shallow trenches. These systems were to be defended by the use of the Chauchat automatic rifles. This is the method of consolidation which was most generally employed during the series of brilliant American operations which so materially aided the Allied progress, during these critical months of midsummer, 1918.

Wire entanglements were constucted by the men of the engineer corps, under a galling and withering artillery fire and a constant machine gun barrage, while the third wave of the assault was employed in the construction of several strong points in the immediate rear of the front line, one of these points being in the edge of the woods east of the town of Cantigny, another in the little patch of woodland northeast of the town, and one in the cemetery north of the town.

Having completed these hasty preliminary works, the Yankee doughboys awaited the coming enemy counter, undergoing, for two hours, the unabated intensity of the enemy artillery fire, which was responsible for a large number of our casualties, and which was

responded to by our own artillery as well as that of the French batteries which had been assigned to our attacking troops.

Naturally, the enemy was supremely confident that they could retake the lost positions from the "green" American troops, and, about two hours after the town had been taken from them, they attacked from the reserve trenches in the vicinity of Lalval Wood, covered by a carefully checked and prepared barrage. This attack was launched against the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 28th Infantry.

One of the lessons which the enemy seemed never to have really learned was that they usually followed their barrage at too great a distance,—usually about two hundred meters. Our custom was to follow up the barrage at a distance of from fifty to one hundred meters, otherwise the artillery fire would have passed over the line to be attacked and, if followed at a distance of such magnitude as that employed by the enemy, would have given the infantry a chance to get reorganized and waiting for the attacking waves to come upon them. Our tactical employment of the barrage, in synchronization with the infantry attacks, was to follow the barrage at such short distance as to throw the bayonets into the enemy before they could have even partially recovered from the effects of the shell-fire, as they would then present a disorganized and confused mass rather than efficient fighting units.

Accordingly, the Yankee doughboys waited until the enemy waves were scarcely a hundred yards from them and then a burst of flame swept down the line, which sent the enemy reeling backwards towards Framecourt Wood, leaving at least 500 killed and wounded upon the ground.

This was the first of six enemy counter-attacks that came upon our lines, within forty-eight hours, each successive attack being more desperate than the preceding, and the enemy became more and more chagrined at their inability to retake the lost positions.

One military critic puts the situation in this manner: "It was not only that they were of value to him in themselves; the accumulating evidence of the dash and doggedness of the American troops as they continued to maintain themselves triumphantly against the utmost efforts that their adversaries could make was giving the lie so plainly to the German thesis that the American troops were no good and never could be made good; that it was impossible for the American effort ever to become a decisive factor in the war, that the enemy dared not let them retain their advantage. If they did retain it, the news was sure to leak out to the German army and people and to strike a chill of terror and foreboding to their hearts, as they thought of the millions of other equally sturdy Americans who were on their way to France, in fact or potentiality."

This was the reason that the enemy continued to hurl a devastating deluge of shell-fire and gas into the crumbling ruins of the town, and throw forward the best of their troops in a vain effort to crush the thin but stubborn American line. But, in these same thinly held positions at Cantigny, they encountered the same strains of patriotic blood and determination never to yield, that had flowed through the veins of the ancestors of the defenders of that thin line,—the blood of the sons of those who had beaten back the British at Concord and Lexington,—the blood of men who "had come three thousand miles across the sea to fight for human freedom and their own outraged rights, upon a foreign soil, and they now stood firmly to their task."

Finally, the enemy attacks were relaxed, after they had suffered the loss of nearly one thousand killed, half that number wounded and two hundred or more prisoners, together with several pieces of heavy and light artillery and many machine guns, rifles and munitions. Now it was that, seeing no sacrifice, however bloody, could ever recover their lost positions; that the moral effect of the fight must be balanced elsewhere, and that American blood had come at last to tip the scales in favor of the forces of Right and Justice and Liberty, they withdrew and settled down to their new positions.

Here, also, the men of the 1st Division, held to their lines until relieved by French

troops during the night of July 8th-9th, when they received their well-deserved rest, short though it was, before they moved down to win new laurels for themselves on the fields of the Marne salient, southeast of Soissons.

"At Cantigny," says one military critic, "the 1st Division had taught the world the significance of the lesson that the American soldier was fully equal to the soldier of any other nation on the field of battle. Who can estimate the extent of the subtle influence which this proof exerted upon the gigantic armies locked in battle along the Western front, heartening the warriors of the Allies, dismaying those of the Central Powers, as they struggled literally for the mastery of the world upon the fields of the Marne and Picardy and Flanders, through the weeks of June and July, 1918,—perhaps the most momentous weeks in all history."

Small wonder, is it not, that we men of the A. E. F., on meeting mud-bedraggled buddies, slowly and wearily tramping along the "long, long trail" in the Argonne, and hailing them with the inevitable question of the fighting man: "What outfit, buddy?" and upon receiving, in reply: "First Division," could simply gasp out, "Oh!" and plod along on our weary way to the lines!

CHAPTER II.

With the Second Division on the Paris-Metz Highway.

When the German Armies launched their great Aisne Offensive, on May 27th, 1918, the Allies found themselves as gravely threatened here as they had been in Picardy, in March.

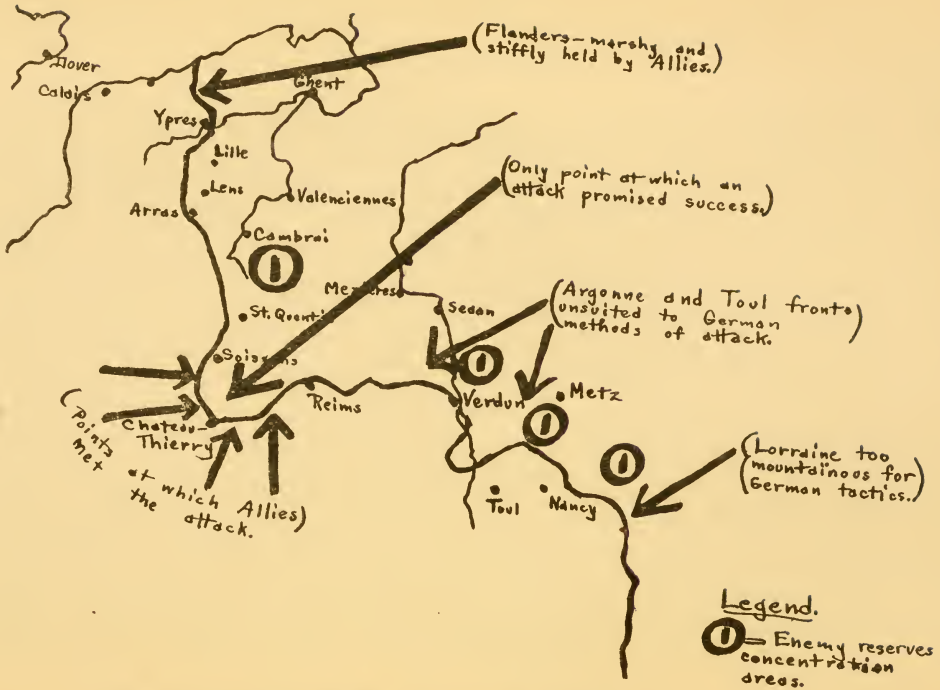
The German Army, between Reims and Coucy-le-Chateau, at this time was able to inflict some of the greatest surprises, if not the greatest surprise of their third great offensive of 1918. They were able to do this on account of their rapid concentration of their forces which they had brought into this sector.

The Seventh German Army, under the command of General von Boehn, and which was now operating along the plateau of the Chemin des Dames in the direction of Soissons and to the east and south of that city, and, in conjunction with the First German Army, under General F. von Below, operating to the east of the Seventh Army, with its left attacking Reims, had broken the Allied lines, and were advancing swiftly southward, driving backward the weary and inferior forces of the French and British, already worn out by their severe fighting in Picardy and Flanders.

Little wonder, then, that the face of the entire situation at this time looked exceedingly black and gloomy for the Allies. The enemy waves were forever advancing, toward the Marne, which was the coveted prize of their efforts, the attacking forces being constantly replenished by fresh troops from the Rhenish depots. To stop, or at least to check, these advances, the allied forces sent forward many frantic and heroic attacks,—all of them in vain,—for their forces were depleted and nearly exhausted.

Then came the later days of May, and the gray hosts were overrunning Soissons and Fere-en-Tardenois, and leaving the already devastated city of Reims,—"la Grande Blessee," as the good French peasants call it,—in a pocketed salient which was becoming daily more and more difficult for the allied troops to hold. And, furthermore, by the greatly increasing and constantly maintained pressure of the enemy masses, the wedge which they had driven into the allied lines was bulging dangerously in the direction of the French capital. This bulge was more apparent in the open and level country between the Ourcq and Marne rivers.

The allied forces threw every available reserve against the advancing masses of Prussian infantry, and succeeded in slackening the momentum of the enemy machine. Nevertheless, the enemy still possessed the decided advantage of having the initiative in their hands, and could therefore select



Map showing logical point of attack to be at Chateau-Thierry bulge toward Paris.

almost any point, from which, using this advantage, they could drive another smaller wedge into the allied lines. The most likely place for such an attempt would therefore be at a point between Soissons and Chateau-Thierry, for it was at this face of the salient that they would then create a western face for their salient.

For the third time in a few short weeks, the French people saw their enemy succeed in driving backward their worn and weary poilus; they knew that the situation was one of extreme gravity; they knew that the hosts of the enemy must be stopped now, or all would be lost; but they set their teeth and refused to yield an inch more of their precious French soil to the desecrating feet of the invader! How sublime and heroic was the courage and the self-forgetting resolution of the French people in such dark days as those that preceded the battle of Chateau-Thierry!

The problem was very simple, on its face, for the allied command. They must halt the enemy attacks actually under way, and, at the same time, hold enough reserves at hand to meet attacks elsewhere. In doing this they must employ only just so much of their available strength as was necessary, keeping the remainder always well at hand for shifting to other points to meet the enemy attacks which might develop elsewhere.

Such was the task that confronted Marshal Foch during the dark days that came before

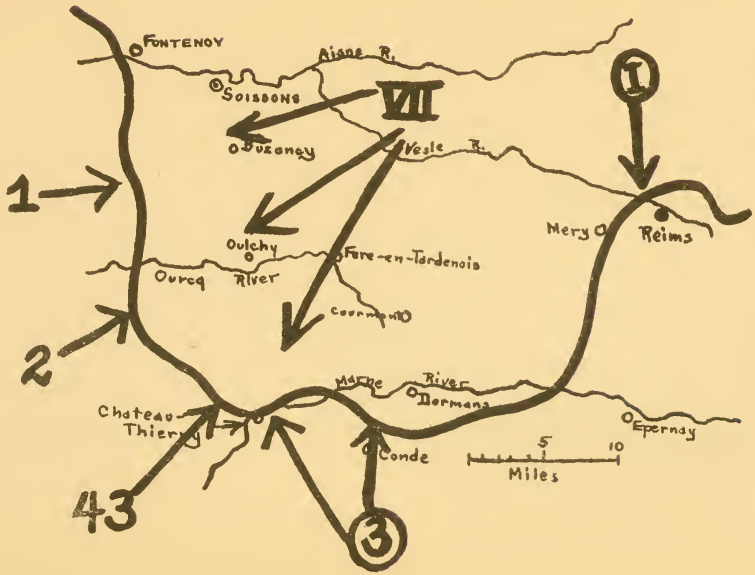
the ever-memorable fighting of midsummer, 1918, and the fact that the forces available for him to accomplish this feat, were wholly inadequate, only enhances the brilliancy of the success with which he met the crisis.

The Commander-in-Chief of the American Forces in France, General Pershing, had said: "All that we have is yours," at the time of the great German offensive of March 21st. Therefore, "with faith in the valor of the Americans, Marshal Foch ordered them to a place of the greatest danger, and therefore of the greatest honor,—to the banks of the Marne near Chateau-Thierry and to the great Paris-Metz Highway, where it crosses rolling hills to the northwest of Chateau-Thierry, there to throw themselves across the apex of the German invasion and bar the road to Paris."

Accordingly, the 2nd American Division, under General Omar Bundy, was ordered from its area, near Chaumont-en-Vexin, northwest of Paris, to the vicinity of Chateau-Thierry. They entrained at once, on May 30th, and moved to Montreiul-aux-Lions, establishing a divisional P. C. there. This is a little town on the Paris-Metz Highway, about ten kilometers west of Chateau-Thierry and on the main line of enemy advance.

As they advanced, the news from the front became steadily darker. The enemy was advancing always, and although the valiant French poilus were fighting bravely and heroically, they were greatly outnumbered

Allied Dispositions To Meet German Lunge For Paris. (May, 1918).



Legend

I- German First Army attacking Reims.

VII- German VII-th Army attacking Soissons.

1- First American Division.

2- 2d Division (U.S.)

3- 3d Division (U.S.)

43- 43d French Div.

Heavy line shows front at opening of drive.

and exhausted by their long fighting and marching. The enemy was pushing forward steadily,—so steadily in fact, that it would become necessary for the Americans to take up and establish a defensive position at once.

Accordingly, this was done, with the 9th Infantry in line between Bonneil (near the Marne, southwest of Chateau-Thierry) and Le Thiolet, which was on the Paris-Metz road; the 6th Marines, extending from Le Thiolet to Lucy-le-Bocage; and the 23rd Infantry, which was operating temporarily under command of the 43rd French Division, continued the line to the Bois de Veuilly.

Looking northeast from these positions, one's vision encounters a series of crests and slopes of a low ridge of hills, for the most part rather heavily wooded. Further along, the silvery thread of the little creek,—the Ru Gobert, so soon to become a part of America's great history, forever,—ran windingly, between the green and brown of its banks, through its valley, turning, serpent-like, in and out between the little scattered villages of Belleau, Torcy, Bussiares, and Bouresches. Still further on, one encountered the more steeply rising slopes of the opposite side of this valley, where the enemy lines had been established already, with his artillery sweeping the positions which the Yanks had but recently taken over.

After the Americans had organized their defensive lines, the French were to fall back through them, from their own indefensible

and only temporary positions. This was the cause of much unjust criticism by people who have claimed to know that our valiant allies, the French poilus, had been in full retreat and that the Americans, advancing bravely to meet the enemy, had pushed through their disorganized ranks and stopped the Boche in a characteristic dashing Yankee manner. Such was not the case, and the War Department at Washington can furnish any careful investigator with the truth of the whole matter.

The falling back of the French at the Paris-Metz road was just as much a planned part of the operation as was the formation of the defensive line by the men of the 2nd American Division.

Let us try to play fair with the brave men who fought with our noble allies, for they, the poilus of France, had already won the battle before our men got there, for they had held the Boche during the highly critical time that the Americans were organizing the defensive positions where the enemy advance was to be stopped.

Friends, do not be prone to underestimate the aid which our valiant allies of all nationalities gave us, for we must remember that we were fresh, while they had been worn out by four years of fighting before we ever came into it at all; they had lost whole families and had had their towns in scores wiped from the face of the earth by the devastating hand of war; our homes were safe and far

from the destructive hand of the enemy; and for every American grave upon the soil of France, there are a thousand French and English graves, beside those of the heroic Belgians. They were fighting and suffering and dying, while we were trying to find out whether or not we ought to fight, and whether or not we should stay out of it, and take the position of the passive neutral. Ask the men who fought beside him what they think of the poilu of France, and they will tell you that he was just as good and, perhaps, a lot better than they were. If the fighters think well of them, why not those who stayed at home?

Shall we ever forget the blue-clad poilus of France? Funny fellows, they were, to many of us, with their queer little caps, tilted gayly on one side of their heads, and their war-worn, and rain-faded horizon-blue uniforms. And what a multitude of little "musettes,"—every last one of them, bulging like an Arabian water-skin,—filled with the little trinkets they loved so well, and with their rations for the long weary marches, or vigils of trench-life. And, over all, was slung his rifle, nearly as long as himself,—but carried almost tenderly, it seemed, as one would carry a child one loved!

It seemed to many of us that these sturdy souls of France were made rather for love and laughter,—for the associations of the tiny gardens where red wine and white wine of the southern vintage was wont to flow,

and where men were wont to gather, of an evening, and pass the gossip of the day over the flowing glasses. One could almost picture them, sitting there, in the reddening sunlight of southern France or in Languedoc, or Burgundy, sipping their wines, while the maidens danced gayly in the open space between the tables; not born for the stern and awful realities of war, where the rough and weary road stretches red and lone and long, and desolate. But they surely trod its blighted and broken pathway, with a singing heart,—bravely and gayly! ever dismissing the pain and sorrow and pathos of it all with their heroic little: "C'est la guerre!" and a shrug of their shoulders.

We have seen them, treading the pathway down into the Valley of the Shadows,—worn and weary, and hungry,—racked and worn by the long days and nights in the lines,—yet forever smiling, that heroic and almost sublime smile, which it seemed, nothing under heaven could wipe away! Tender as women, always, when the little children came wonderingly to look at their sturdy forms, or glance over their rifles and ask them for: "Un cigarette, s'il vous plait, M'sieur." And yet, leaping with a snarl of rage and anger, upon the enemy, with his long, slender "Rosalie" at their throats!

Such is but a poor attempt to portray the poilu.

Returning once again to the day of June 3rd, 1918, we find that the enemy was al-

ready sounding out the front that was interposed across his advance to the Paris-Metz road, and was finding it solid. But he only put off his attacks until the next day, when he attempted to dislodge both the 2nd American and 43rd French Divisions, by launching an attack against the line from Montcourt, near the Marne, to Chezy-en-Orxois, about five kilometers northwest of the Bois de Veuilly. But his attacks were everywhere checked, due to the arrival of the other units of the 2nd Division,—the 5th Marines and a part of the 2nd Field Artillery Brigade, which had been reinforced by six groupments of French field artillery.

The enemy lines had already been stopped in the valley of the Ru Gobert, opposite the Americans, and the same evening, the French outposts retired through the American lines, thus completing the movement of taking over the sector.

About dusk, on June 4th, the enemy launched a concerted attack on Veuilly-la-Poterie, which was at the junction of the 2nd American and the 43rd French Divisions. This attack was repulsed to the north of the village, and, later on, a renewal of the attack suffered the same fate, with losses of about two hundred, although they gained a slight advantage on Hill 123, which, however, they lost to the French on the following day.

Our artillery very effectively broke up an enemy attack which was launched against

Hill 142, just south of Bussiares, on June 5th.

The American lines were everywhere holding tenaciously, although the fighting in this vicinity had been violent and severe in the extreme. For this reason, if no other, the force of the enemy attacks may be said to have reached their culmination on the night of the 5th of June, and thus ended for all time the tactical importance of the enemy drive for Paris, just as the repulse further eastward had stopped their advance through the bulge of Chateau-Thierry.

Here, having been terribly worn down and depleted by its harrowing fighting, the 43rd French Division was relieved by the 167th French Division, which took its positions on the left of the 2nd American Division, while the 164th French was likewise relieved by the 4th French Cavalry Division, on the right.

Then, too, the 2nd American Division was realligned, and now presented the following order of battle, from right to left; 9th Infantry, 23rd Infantry, of the 3rd Infantry Brigade; the 6th Marines and 5th Marines of the 4th Infantry Brigade, or, as it was later called, the famous "Marine Brigade." Likewise, the front of the 2nd Division was strengthened by drawing in its left flank, from the Bois de Veuilly to the road between Bussiares and Champillon.

Deluge after deluge of artillery fire was thrown upon our newly taken positions by

the enemy artillery, which was now employing high explosive and yperite shells. This fire greatly endangered the main artery of the American system of supply, viz., the road to la Ferte-sous-Jouarre.

As a new line of defense had been taken and established, it was therefore necessary to drive the enemy from their observation and dominating points in the valley of the creek, in order to make the American positions more tenable, and to remove the danger of accurate enemy artillery fire, which might paralyze the service of our supply.

Was the time now propitious for the attempting of a direct break by the Yanks? or would it be better to hold the enemy where they now were, until such time as they were in condition?

The 2nd American Division accordingly set about the making of the plans for the taking of this valley, in order that they might dominate the positions there.

Therefore, in conjunction with the 167th French Division, on its left, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 5th Marines swept forward through the broken woodlands, in the mists of the morning, with their objectives set as the edges of the crests north of Champillon, as well as those looking down into the open valley about Torcy and Bussiares.

This attack was met by intense machine gun and rifle fire, but the Yankee "Leathernecks" pushed onward, and at seven in the morning had taken all objectives and com-

manded the valley at this point. Now the advance of the 167th French Division became successful, and they established themselves on the dominating heights just west of the Marines.

With the object of pushing forward its center so as to take the villages of Belleau and Bouresches, and so as to align the center with the left, the 2d Division set its objectives on a line which ran along the valley from a point east of Bussiares to the eastern edge of Bouresches. Then, the 5th and 6th Marines and the 23rd Infantry Regiments were sent forward, on the morning of June 6th. These attacks were sent forward against the tangled woodlands of the Bois de Triangle and the Bois de Belleau (Belleau Wood), and, as the lines surged backward and forward, among the tumbled and tangled thickets, one of the most ferocious battles ever staged was fought by the determined and maddened men of the contending hosts.

Time and time again, the surging lines enveloped enemy nests, where the spiteful flame of the spitting machine guns, tore their ranks to bits and scattered the shrieking wounded about the shell-swept ground before them. Again and again, they flew at each others' throats cursing inwardly, as they swayed to and fro in the deadly grapple of maddened men; torn and bleeding and half frenzied with pain, they fought desperately, driving their shining little trench-daggers deep into the loins of their opponents, then

letting the limp, still bodies slip noiselessly to the ground, and dashing forward again to seek out another. And all of the time, the ground all about them was being torn by shells, which were bursting everywhere, throwing bits of stone and dirt and bodies, and all of the debris of battle about in every direction while making the earth tremble beneath the feet of the warriors.

The following day, although the left had been able to add hardly anything to their advance of the preceding day, the right of the 2d Division was now in possession of Bouresches. Likewise, it had advanced into the Bois de Belleau as far as Hill 181, where they had dug in on the summit. In doing this, the American lines now lay on advantageous ground for observation of the enemy lines and positions further in the woodland.

But the enemy machine gun nests in the village and woods had taken a terrible toll, and in these two battles the Marine Brigade had sustained losses of 24 officers and 390 men killed or wounded, and the 9th and 23rd Infantries had lost 377 officers and men.

From this point, for several weeks, a battle almost without respite continued along the front, more especially near Bouresches and southeast of that town, toward Vaux, as well as in the Bois de Belleau. As one authority puts it: "The ability of the Americans to advance at these points, or of the enemy to prevent them from advancing, became so obviously a test, before the whole

world, of the relative moral stamina of the two races, that the contest took on the importance of one far greater than that represented by the mere tactical value of the territory involved." And, although the lines swayed backward and forward many times, always the Americans maintained the supremacy.

Then the 9th Infantry, advancing north of the Bois de la Morette, with the French troops and companies E and F of the 30th Infantry, 3d Division, took the southern slope of Hill 204 and the village of Monneaux.

On June 11th, the Marine Brigade advanced, covered by a rolling barrage, and took all of the remainder of the Bois de Belleau, with the exception of a few spurs which ran northward,—with over 300 prisoners and 39 machine guns and light trench mortars. Finally, on June 25th, all these places were cleared out by the superb advance which did not halt until it was far out of the valley toward Torcy and had netted 300 prisoners and 24 machine guns.

Many enemy counter-attacks went astray during these days, one of them launched on the positions of the 9th and 23d Infantries, in the vicinity of Bouresches and north of the Bois de La Morette. This counter failed to retake any of the lost ground from these regiments. Still another of the more important enemy counters was an especially violent one which was launched against Bouresches and the Bois de Belleau, but was

hurled back by the combined efforts of the doughboys and marines.

During these weeks of fighting, the only relief of the 2d Division was that of three battalions of Marines, whose places were taken for five days (June 16-21) by three battalions of the 7th Infantry of the 3d Division. Then, too, during these operations, there had been opposed to this division, on various points of its front: 197th (relieved June 9th); 237th (relieved June 11th); 10th (relieved June 15th); 28th (relieved June 21st); and the 5th Prussian Guard; 231st and 87th enemy divisions.

One noted authority, in speaking of the wonderful fight of the 2d Division in the valley of the Ru Gobert, and their repulse of the enemy masses, says: "And this at a time when the German Command was exultantly proclaiming to all the world the impending overthrow and dissolution of the Allied Armies! As a matter of fact, it was precisely at this time and on account of this fighting that the German High Command had borne in upon it the iron fact that the scales were swinging against them, slowly but none the less surely."

However, there still remained one important task for the 2d division to perform before its history in this theatre of operations should be called complete. Vaux must be taken.

"In the creek valley between Hill 204 (taken by the French and Americans on

June 7th-8th), and the positions north of the Bois de la Morette (taken by the 9th Infantry at the same time), lay the village of Vaux,—tiny but deadly. Its stone houses were fortresses armed with German machine guns; its cellars were bomb-proofs, sheltering hidden swarms of infantry; its streets were covered ways filled with ghastly surprises for the attackers. It thrust out a menacing salient into the American lines, sweeping with its fire Monneaux and the communications of Hill 204. It had to be taken!"

That is the way a correspondent saw the situation.

Having established liaison near Monneaux, the 9th infantry prepared to take Vaux, with the aid of the 3d Division.

"Accordingly, every bit of available material of any kind on the subject of Vaux was brought together and carefully studied. Maps and old post-cards were gone over and refugees described in minute detail the construction of its cellars and the intricacies of its streets. Every platoon and squad leader who was going into Vaux had a map showing in red ink the particular cellar he was to take and how to get to it." So writes an early A. E. F. writer.

Then, on the morning of July 1st, after intense artillery preparation, the attack went forward, with the 9th Infantry, supported by the advance of the 23d Infantry on the left, and the 3d Division on the right. About fifteen minutes after the attack went

over, the first wave was in the town, and in less than half an hour it had been taken.

Northwest of Vaux lay the Bois de la Roche, which position was taken by the 23d Infantry, which also improved its positions on Hill 204. But the enemy drove forward a counter against the Bois de la Roche, the next day, which was repulsed, many of the attackers being cut off and taken prisoners.

Vaux was never re-taken by the enemy.

"Summing up the situation," says one authority of A. E. F. history, "in Chateau-Thierry, in the Bois de Belleau, in Bouresches and Vaux and on Hill 204, the Germans had now faced the men from across the seas in fair combat; before the audience of the world they had met with them the moral test, and the result was a foretaste of what was soon to come. By the 1st day of July, 1918, men of discernment in Germany, could trace the word "defeat" written across the setting sun of "Der Tag."

CHAPTER III.

When the Yanks Came.

"Over There, Over There,
Send the word, send the word over there,
That the Yanks are coming,
The Yanks are coming . . . . . "

Those were the words of a rather popular song that came into its own during the infancy of the A. E. F. and was sung up and down the land, from cantonments in the "States" to Seicheprey, away up on that almost forgotten sector "northwest of Toul," where the handful of A. E. F.'ers had been first introduced to "friend Jerry."

And it was true, too, for the Yanks were coming with every ship that touched the shores of France, and they were coming with the determination that they wouldn't "come back till it was over, Over There!"

Then came the month of June, 1918, when the whole of the civilized world was scarcely breathing, or rather, seemingly dared not breathe, while the gray-clad hosts of Prussian Autocracy were dashing forward, in an avalanche of brute power and militaristic domination, down through Fere-en-Tardenois to the banks of the already historic Marne. And, following this period of deepest darkness for the allied cause, came the startling and breath-taking news that the full ava-

lanche of the enemy hordes had been met and stopped on the banks of the Marne by a mere handful of Yankees,—"With the Help of God and a few Marines!"

Ask those who were there at the bridgehead of Chateau-Thierry,—those weary and bedraggled men of the 7th Machine Gun Battalion, Third Division, who, with the wear and tear of over a hundred and eighty weary kilometers of hiking behind them,—to say nothing of their thirty-six hours or more without sleep, even for a few moments,—plodded wearily into the battered little town on the banks of the Marne, in the sunset of that June evening, with the white and gray puffs of the exploding enemy shells dotting the twilight skies of summer.

When, on the 27th of May, 1918, the enemy smashed through the thinly-held French positions on the plateau of the Chemin des Dames and dashed forward towards the Marne, only two American divisions were available for Marshal Foch to throw into the breach in a mad attempt to stop or, at least, to stem for the moment, the onrushing enemy tide.

And so it was, that the first to get into the apex of the great battle which was fast developing here,—and, according to the official reports of the operations, the only "men who fought in Chateau-Thierry itself,"—were the men of the 7th Machine Gun Battalion, of the Third Division. Nevertheless, it stands also as a matter of official

history, that the majority of the fighting in this area,—that is, the area to the north of the town of Chateau-Thierry,—fell to the men of the Second Division, who were destined to make a name for themselves and for American arms such as has scarcely ever been equaled in our entire history, in their fight in the Bois de Belleau, Torcy, Bussiares, and Bouresches, and in the valley of the little creek, the Ru Gobert.

Perhaps it might be well to quote the words of one of the members of the historical section of the Great Headquarters, A. E. F., staff as setting forth in the fewest and most pointed words, the crux of the whole matter. He says: "The Third Division was the first to reach the banks of the Marne; and those were Third Division machine gunners, who, racing across country in their little 'hommes 40, Chevaux 8,' reached the river in time to fight for four days and nights that gallant fight at the Chateau-Thierry bridges, of which the thrill ran around the world."

And, let it here be said that the Third Division was at this time making at Chateau-Thierry a name that shall stand for all time as equal to any other that has ever been blazoned upon the tablets of America's glorious history.

The Third Division had, as yet, completed only part of its period of training in the vicinity of Chateauvillain and La Ferte sur Aube when it received orders, on May 30th, 1918, to move at once to the front.

This order stated that: "The 5th Infantry Brigade, consisting of the 4th and 7th infantries and the 8th Machine Gun Battalion, will be attached to the 6th French Army, under General Degoutte, and assigned to the defense of the passage of the Marne from Chateau-Thierry to Dormans. That part of the 6th Infantry Brigade, consisting of the 38th Infantry and half of the 9th Machine Gun Battalion, will hold the crossings of the Marne from Dormans eastward to Damery, under direction of the 10th Colonial French Division of the 5th French Army. The remainder of the 6th Infantry Brigade, viz., the 30th Infantry and the remaining half of the 9th Machine Gun Battalion, will be the support of the 5th Brigade. The Divisional Machine Gun Battalion,—the 7th —will march at once for Chateau-Thierry; the remaining troops will go by rail May 31st, for their respective destinations."

Of these various assignments, none proved so urgent as that of the Divisional Machine Gun Battalion, the 7th, which was in the fighting from the first time they entered the little town of Chateau-Thierry, until its final relief, ninety-six hours later. The remainder of the 3rd Division suffered very slightly, with the exception of some severe fighting in the Jaulgonne Bend of the Marne, where the enemy attempted a crossing, but was halted.

And so it was that, with the horizon-blue-clad poilus of France, worn and weary and

mud-bedraggled, and torn and bleeding, fighting a seemingly hopeless battle with the advancing enemy waves in the shell-torn streets ahead of them, the men of the 7th Machine Gun Battalion, hastily getting their guns into position so as to play along the main bridge in the center of the town, and likewise up and down the banks of the Marne on both sides, went into battle which was to continue for ninety-six hours more!

Wave after wave of the enemy hosts swept forward towards the coveted goal, determined to either take the bridge or to make possible a crossing at some other point which would enable them to deploy into the open and almost level country beyond the banks of the Marne. But, across the stream, was the indomitable barrier of Yankee gunners, and "once again, for the second time in four years, they made the Marne the high tide of the Hun invasion!"

Thousands of shells of all calibres flew overhead; some of them with their sinister whistle, many of them seemingly howling, but all of them uniting in one great rising crescendo, and the fortunes of battle ebbed and flowed beneath them. Great enemy shells dropped with crash and roar into the thin line of stubborn American doughboys, throwing debris of every description high into the air, and filling the spaces between the great rising chant and crescendo of battle with the moans and shrieks of the dying and wounded. Beyond, through the battered

streets of the town, gray-clad masses began to move forward, down to the banks of the Marne. It was the enemy infantry, advancing in their packed formation, resembling a great gray monster crawling down to devour the men who were standing their ground at the bridges of Chateau-Thierry. They soon deploy, fresh troops filling the gaps and then they advance again towards the goal of Prussian ambition,—the Marne.

Low, sinister shrieks and whistles come from above, and the shells from the allied batteries begin to fall in the midst of the advancing enemy masses. Men, covered with blood and mud, crawling over one another, and rushing about in a dazed state, writhing in agony or pushing doggedly forward, attempt to advance again to the river banks. The ground and streets are dotted with the huddled forms of the dead and dying, but the second wave is already pressing forward, and once again the Yankee machine guns tear great gaping holes in their advancing ranks; and still they hurl themselves against the American positions among the shell-holes and ruins along the river.

All the time, the uncanny whistle of the flying bullets, with their "s-s-s-s-s-s-s!" came from the advancing hosts across the river, and then, once again the Yanks turned the muzzles of their deadly guns full on this onward rushing wave of humanity, poured forth a steady stream of steel, as the guns rat-tat-tat their message of death and hate.

Shrieks, curses and groans rise from the ranks across the river, which was now running with the blood of the contending hosts, and time and again the whole mad drama of war is deepened by the boom of the batteries in the rear,—adding their finishing touch to the ghastliness of the scene.

But the 7th Machine Gun Battalion stuck! and behind them and the barrier formed by their comrades, clad in the immortal blue of long-suffering France, the allied forces were able to dispose more fresh troops, of the 164th French and 3rd United States Divisions. These new troops took up strong defensive positions along the Marne on both sides of the town, and effecting, by the 30th Infantry, liaison with the 9th Infantry, of the 2nd Division, on the right of that division, near Mountcourt, west of the river.

Finally, came the morning of the 4th of June, and with it relief for the weary 7th Machine Gun Battalion! But, as they filed out of their positions, and plodded backward from the line of the river, they seemed to wear the faint semblance of a smile of victory, for behind them were the men of two other regiments of their own division, the 3rd, as well as an entire French division. Why did they smile,—even though those smiles were the smiles of the exhausted and weary men who have stood face to face with death for ninety-six long hours? Because they knew that victory was theirs; that the setting sun of that day should bring into

being the birth of that new power which was destined, even then, to spell defeat and ruin for the proud banners of Prussian autocracy! They were supremely confident that the enemy never would break through the line of heroes who they had left in charge of their blood-bought lines along the Marne banks, and in the streets of Chateau-Thierry.

It is true the operation had been costly, but had it been even more costly, it surely would have been worth the price. When it is considered what effect the fighting of the untried American troops had upon the morale of the allied armies, perhaps never before had any like number of men in so short a time contributed as much to the final victory as did the 2nd and 3rd Divisions at and near Chateau-Thierry.

As one writer, whose name I have forgotten for the time being, puts it: "The mother of every boy who was killed there can say that no soldier's life ever was given more effectively during the whole war."

How brave and self-sacrificing and altogether noble have been our mothers and all of our noble American women during these stirring times! And still all of their care and devotion had for its ending a grave in France!

"There, where poppies bloom, and fields are scarred
With unknown heroes' graves, remorseless, numb,

And swifter than the light'ning it may come
From unknown depths where earthly joys
are barred,
Where Love is lost, the quickening pulse is
still
And Death's rhythmical beat is audible.
Or in the trench where golden hearted Truth,
Clad in the panoply of grace and right,
Sublimely pours the sweet red wine of youth
A surf of blood upon the sea of Might."

And still has there been no agonizing cry of revolt from the mother or wife or sweetheart, no furious imprecations, no bitterness of soul.

And so America stoops and kisses the cold, still lips of her martyred sons, covering them with her starry banner of Liberty; placing them,—her supreme sacrifice of honor and love,—upon the Altar of God's throne, that Liberty and Justice and Freedom from Oppression may not be forever lost amidst the crushing and brutal blows of the Mailed Fist and Iron Heel of the Autocrat.

Returning to the discussion of the relative importance of the fight at Chateau-Thierry, let us consider for a few moments, what it meant to the allied cause and morale, at this stage of the great game of chess which was being waged on the western frontier of civilization. Perhaps it would be best to quote several noted authorities.

The first one at hand, written by a staff officer of the A. E. F. Headquarters, states:

"The effect on the French was immediate, visible and startling. The drooping French morale revived as a midsummer flower lifts its head after a cooling shower."

The same authority, later adds: "The American morale had also been sagging. It could not have been otherwise. Our troops had had to wait around too long, and it had taken all the heart out of them. Homesick beyond words, they had to prepare themselves slowly for trench warfare, a deadly thing, the while the world told them that the war would last for years and years. They began to wonder whether they were going to be so darned good after all. Then suddenly the whole face of the matter changed. News came from the Marne valley that Americans were pitching into the fight, that it was old-fashioned, paste-'em-one-in-the-eye fighting of their own sort, that they were getting away with murder. And every American from Camp Lewis to Toul, said: 'Gee, we're pretty good,' and became so by thinking it."

And you can readily see what sort of effect this would have on the troops in France. Of course, every division, either on ship or already landing, began to feel that, after everything was said and done, the stories of enemy prowess were idle tales of the billets, and that there would really be nothing to it, when they would be given the chance to get into the game for good. They began to think that all of these weary months of train-

ing was all "bunk" and unnecessary; that all they needed was the chance to take "a paste at that Big German Rifle Range," and they would show what sort of stuff they were made of.

Accordingly, General Pershing became commander of a bunch of real fighting units, scarcely more than raw recruits, of only a few short months' training. Transformed, almost over night, into units fit to put into immediate use at the fighting lines, should the necessity arise for throwing them into the breach at once.

And, then and there, the policy of sending them into the fight at once was adopted, and, as one of our army men puts it: "All that happened from July 18th to November 11th followed as a natural though unforeseen consequence of what happened in June northwest of Chateau-Thierry. Just as an electric spark will, in a flash, take a jar of properly proportioned hydrogen and oxygen and turn it into water, so the current which, spitting blue flame and setting the whole world a-tingle, ran forth from Belleau Wood in June, 1918, took that miscellaneous assortment of dubious Americans known as the A. E. F. and turned it into an army."

Let us get the true perspective of the fight at the Chateau-Thierry area and see just what it means and really amounted to, from the purely military standpoint. After all, it was not so much of a miracle as we have been told it was.

It is true that the Americans, with the aid of their almost exhausted allies, the French, did stop the German drive at the banks of the Marne, and, when the lines moved again, their direction was towards Germany. But let us also remember that, when the Germans smashed through the Chemin des Dames plateau area on May 27th, the allied troops had already established a new defensive line and system of well chosen positions, manned by men who were thoroughly schooled in their calling and highly capable of withstanding anything that the enemy would probably bring against them. And this line of defenses was in a position which met and, as history already recounts, turned the tide of German invasion. But that tide of invasion consisted of a German army which was almost already exhausted by its incredibly successful advance,—an advance which carried it across the Aisne, through Tardenois and the Ourcq, and down to the very banks of the historic Marne. The enemy troops had already outrun even its own expectations and was tired out by its drive, and almost unsupported, on account of the inability of its supplies and reserves to keep pace with the rapidity of its advance.

There has existed a sort of popular notion in this country, that our valiant allies, the French, were at this time, in full retreat through the advancing lines of American troops, and that our men were therefore forced to stand alone and meet the Hun

hordes, bearing the brunt of the fray and finally pushing the invaders backward as their victorious waves swept forward in counter-attack.

This notion is not at all true, and furthermore mightily unfair to our valiant allies and friends,—the horizon-blue-clad poilus of France.

From sources that are official, and, therefore, of much more value as authoritative than would be even the works of the most highly credited correspondents or officers, the story of what really took place comes to me in this manner. The Americans were now operating under command of the French General Degoutte, who was commanding the corps in whose sector they were operating. Opposing the German advance were two French divisions, which were already sadly depleted, and weary from their constant fighting of five days' duration, disheartened, and nearly having reached the limit of their physical endurance. Yet they were ordered to hold their ground until the Americans could get into line behind them. And hold they did, as best they could, and with the determination with which only the poilus of France can fight! After the Americans had formed their defensive lines, the French troops were to fall back through these lines and withdrew for a much-needed rest.

Everything that took place after this time was strictly according to orders that had been issued to the commanders of the several

divisions engaged, as well as to the corps commander, General Degoutte. Therefore, the withdrawal of the exhausted French was no reflection upon their already proved indomitable spirit and stoicism, for in holding as they did just long enough for the resistance lines to be formed, they had already done their full share.

As these facts were, of course, known to only those of high command or at least to only those who were entitled to know, the troops and also the correspondents, construed it faultily, and we find them continually spreading this false impression abroad throughout the land.

Certainly, these men have never lived and fought beside those same French poilus, or else they would never have even so much as dreamed of him yielding a precious inch of his beloved France to the foe.

The spirit of the Yanks, as they advanced to the battlefront, through roads streaming with worn and weary and battered French troops, swarming to the rear in an almost bewildered and dazed sort of way, was little short of wonderful, for they continued their advance with spirits unbroken and nerves unshaken. And to most of them it surely must have seemed as if they alone were holding firm, when all about them was crumbling before the gigantic Hun battering ram.

And so the sunset of June 5th, 1918, brought to the battered and shell-torn streets of Chateau-Thierry, the light of victory and

the promise of deliverance, as the rat-tat-tat of the guns resounded through the ruins of what had once been busy streets, and down along the banks of the river that divides the town into sections. The crumbling ruins of the bridges, turned red and dusty yellow in the slanting rays of the setting sun, the red-tiled roofs of the houses across the river, now scarred and torn by the incessant rain of shells and the spatter of shrapnel and machine gun fire, lent a sort of colorful touch to the plaster walls of the houses, whose smoking ruins stood, looking it seemed, with pitying and wistful windows calling to the spitting fire of the guns to win them back again to the folds of the tricolor of France. The bridge of the Marne, a crumpled ruin,—a pile of stones, now—with here and there the huddled form of some brave Yank or poilu, locked in death-grip with his opponent, in the blue-gray uniform of the guard, over whose silent forms sang the ominous song of the machine guns and the whine of the shells bursting beyond, in the further end of the town.

And further on, from the Chateau garden, surrounded by its great stone wall, with its massive wooden gates, and with its courtyard and gardens strewn with the bodies of the slain; its flowers and plants trampled under foot of the surging hosts which, only a short time previous had been locked in deadly conflict; its well and lattice porticoes torn and twisted by the bursting shells, looked

out and beyond to the tall tower of the cathedral, which now reflected the glory of the sunset, as if a new halo of glory had crowned its lofty spire. All was peaceful now, except for the patter of the distant machine guns, and the great round moon rose over soil redeemed for France!

The Yanks had come!

CHAPTER IV.

Beginning of the Great July Counter.

Perhaps a changing from the defensive to the offensive is the most difficult and delicate operation in the science of warfare. Yet that was precisely what Marshal Foch did when he took the initiative from the hands of von Ludendorff, and began to work the lines of battle backward, in that magnificent series of victories that marked the great July counter-stroke of 1918. And, furthermore, this operation was destined to carry the allied armies forward in one continuous sweep of victory that would have its ending only when the representatives of the German republic should meet to conclude an armistice on November 11th.

Let us, therefore, examine the whole situation that confronted the allied command, as well as the method employed in the conversion of the enemy attacks into allied advantages. By doing this we shall bring into the proper perspective the part that was played in these operations by the American units engaged.

It had always been the policy of the enemy to follow up each and every one of his major offensives by a short breathing spell, in order that his troops might be reformed and consolidated in their new positions, before

launching out again in other operations. Accordingly, it was nothing out of the ordinary when he brought his offensive of May and June, 1918, to a halt,—or rather, had it halted for him,—at the Marne about the 5th or 6th of June.

Let us now divert our attention to the strength of the enemy forces which were massed along the section of front, known as the Argonne-Chateau-Thierry front. By the second week of July, the enemy had massed a total of sixty-three divisions,—every one of them refitted, reinforceed and rested,—in this vicinity. A great number of the enemy reserves were placed opposite the British in the Amiens salient; very few on the front from the Argonne forest to the Swiss border; and a large number to the rear, in position to be rushed to any sector. Allied intelligence located eleven divisions behind General F. von Below's First Army and General von Einem's Third Army, both of the group of the German Crown Prince; in addition to the eighteen divisions already in the battle front.

The German press was blatantly announcing that the allied armies could never again assume offensive tactics, as their reserves had already all been used up in resisting the German attacks. But, due to the increasing rapidity of transportation, American troops had been coming over so rapidly that the allies had a mass of reserves amounting to not less than seventy-two divisions.

Knowing the time, place and strength of the enemy attack, which was delivered on the Champagne-Chateau-Thierry front on July 15th, the allied command was able to dispose just enough of their forces along these lines to meet and hold the attack firmly. Then, two days after the attack was delivered, the armies of von Below and von Mudra (who had replaced von Einem) had engaged thirty-eight divisions, was holding eleven divisions in close support, and thereby reducing their reserves to about fifty-one divisions. They had gained but a few miles and were now being repulsed everywhere. This fact was because the twenty-seven allied divisions in front lines and nineteen in close reserve (part of the 6th, 5th and 4th French Armies), were able to reduce the power of the enemy to nothing while inflicting upon him terrible losses.

On July 18th, when the enemy had involved about fifty divisions—or nearly one-fourth of his total forces on the western front, —in his hopeless drive in Champagne and the eastern side of the Marne salient, Marshal Foch struck. The blow was intended to fall upon the west side of this salient, thereby striking at the system of enemy communications which were necessary to the enemy troops fighting on the opposite side of the salient. He could then crush the enemy forces between the closing wings of his armies or oblige them to break off the fighting. This would mean retreat under the most adverse conditions.

And the French and American troops engaged in this maneuver carried it through with the precision and gallantry that proved them worthy of the best traditions of both nations.

At the opening of the counter-offensive, the enemy was holding the western face of their salient, between Chateau-Thierry and the Aisne River with eleven divisions, without any support; while the allies had twelve divisions in line and ten more in reserve, ready to take their places for the assault early the next morning,—July 18th.

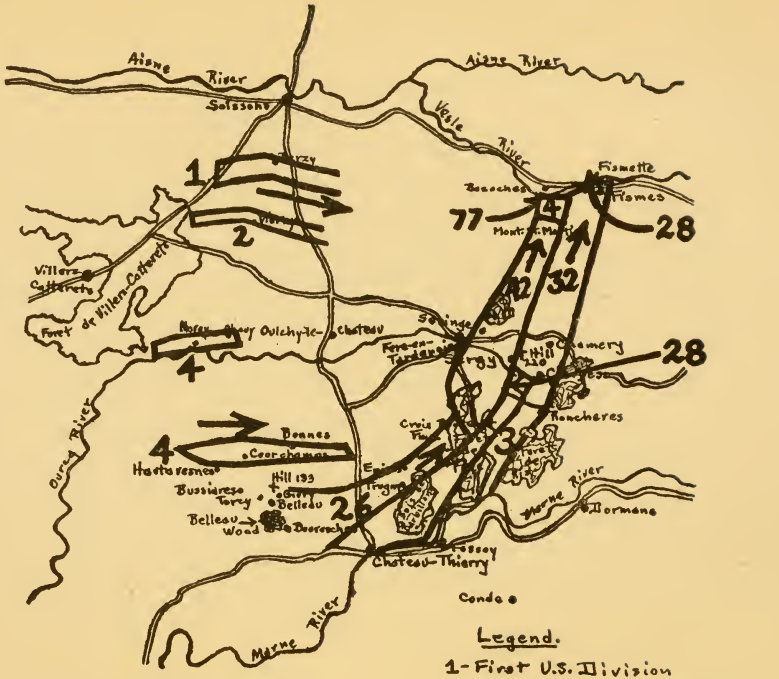
In order that the surprise effect of the advance might not be diminished, the attack went over without any artillery preparation. The advance was made along the front from the Aisne northwest of Soissons to Chateau-Thierry. Fire for accompaniment was laid down, and along the whole line a withering barrage tore the ground in front of our advancing infantry. By nightfall the Yanks had smashed through the enemy trench systems to an average depth of four miles. In this first day's battle, 17,000 prisoners and 250 guns were taken. From this day forth, with undiminished vigor, the allied attacks continued to gain, sometimes greater and sometimes lesser distances, but always going forward, and the direct result of it all was the withering of the enemy initiative once and for all.

There were three American divisions which took part in the offensive operations which began on the morning of July 18th, 1918,—

viz., the 1st, 2d and 26th Divisions. Of these, the 1st, lying a short distance south of the Aisne, with the 2d Division on its right, was a part of the 20th Corps of the 10th French Army. The remaining units of the corps were: the 58th, 69th French Divisions and the 1st Moroccan Division. North of the 20th Corps, four divisions of the 1st French Army carried the lines to the Aisne, and formed the extreme left of the attack. Accordingly, the 20th Corps was disposed for action with the 1st American Division on the left, the 1st Moroccan Division in the center, and the 2d American Division on the right, covering a front of about six miles, and having the 58th and 69th French Divisions in reserve.

Then came two divisions of the 30th French Corps, three divisions of the 11th, two divisions of the 2d, and two divisions of the 7th Corps. Then the First American Corps, under General Hunter Liggett and consisting of: the 167th French Division on the left and the 26th American Division on the right. To the right of this corps, was the 38th French Corps, with the 39th French and the 3d American Divisions, from left to right, followed by the four divisions of the 3d Corps, three divisions of the 1st Colonial, four divisions of the 5th, three divisions of the 2d Italian, and four divisions of the 1st African Colonial Corps. These dispositions would carry the line beyond the city of Reims.

Thus it was seen that the Americans were once again given the post of greatest danger,



Map showing American Sectors in July Counter. (July 18th - 1918).

and therefore of greatest honor, for they were to drive into the center of the salient, capture the highlands southwest of Soissons, and then the front would naturally pivot upon these highlands in swinging northeast and north toward the Vesle River. This task was given to the 1st and 2d American Divisions and the 1st Moroccan Division.

The 26th Division was entrusted with a most delicate and tedious operation, viz., that of marking time and acting as a pivot for the troops operating around the Foret de Villers-Cotterets, while these troops were hammering in the western bulge of the front and straightening it out to swing northward like a gate closing on the Vesle. Then, after the straightening process was completed, the 26th was to become the swinging edge of the gate, advancing to the Vesle with longer gains than those troops to the west of it.

The 3d American Division could, therefore, not begin its part of the work until all of this attack to the westward was well under way, and the enemy attack was stopped and driven backward. Then they too, pivoting on Reims, were likewise to close on the Vesle.

Accordingly, the 1st Division went over the top on the morning of July 18th, into the gray dawn of the plateau between Curty and Missy-aux-Bois. The 18th and 16th Infantries of the 1st Brigade, and the 26th and 28th Infantries of the 2d Brigade, were sent forward for the attack. Before them and

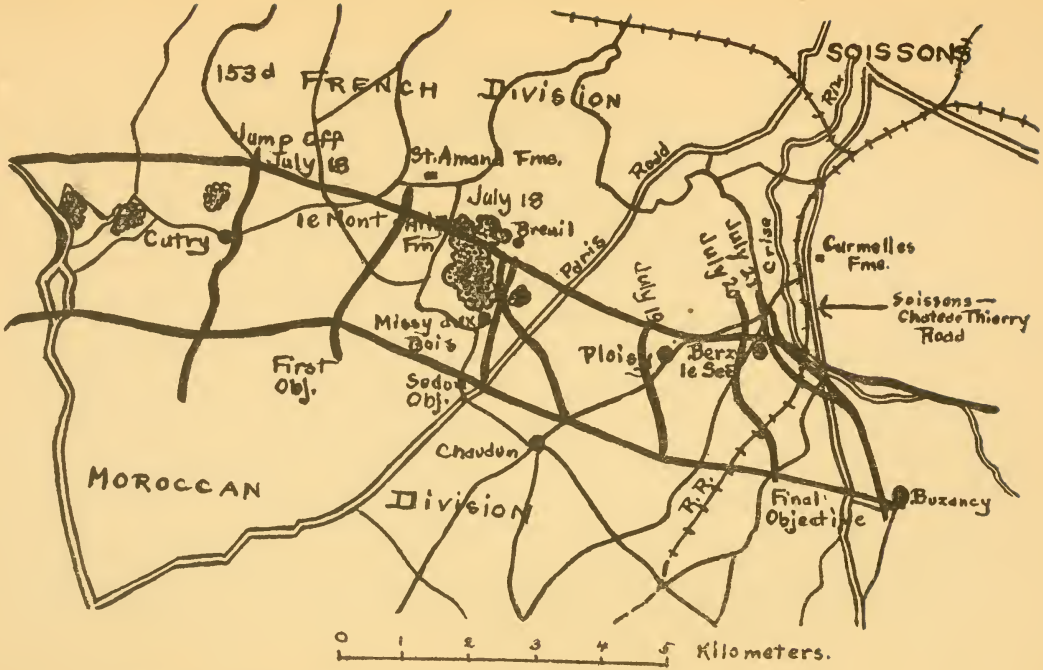
across the lines of the German 6th, 11th Bavarian and 42d Divisions, part of von Boehn's Seventh German Army, swept the barrage from the batteries of the 5th, 6th and 7th Field Artillery Regiments, supported by a number of French batteries.

The country was level, open stretches which ran to the east and southeast, devoid of cover, except for the tree fringes which marked the deep ravine of Missy-aux-Bois, and, further on, the poplar-lined roadway that lay between Soissons and Paris. Just at the edge of the woodland was the little village of Missy; while still further on, was Berzy-le-Sec.

Behind the charging doughboys, lay the deep-cut ravine between the villages of St. Pierre-Aigle and Laversine, on the eastern edge of which were the trenches which they had taken over from a brigade of the Moroccans the night before.

Within two hours from the time of the jumping-off, the men of the 1st Division had overrun more than two miles of the tangle of enemy trenches and wire, and had covered more than half the distance across the open tableland to Missy. Then, two hours later, the second objective,—from Crevancon Farm to the eastern edge of the Missy Ravine, was reached, after a sharp and bloody struggle by the 26th and 28th Infantries in the Missy Ravine.

The Yanks charged in the face of terrific machine gun fire, taking a series of enemy



First Division Sector in the July Counter-
(July 18th, 1918).

nests along the ridge and then moving slowly down the ravine. Meanwhile the Boche gunners were filling this ravine with shells. A strongly fortified post at St. Amand Farm, near Missy Ravine, held up the advance for a time, sweeping the western slope of the valley, until a direct frontal attack was sent forward with bombing parties, to "mop it up."

It was mopped! Later, strong resistance was encountered in a group of buildings, just as the sun peeped through the low hanging clouds. Here the enemy had installed machine guns, behind stone garden walls and the foundations of the houses. The Yanks began methodically mopping up these nests, the men creeping toward the guns, whose fire was so high as to cause but few casualties. Then, suddenly, they leaped to their feet and rushed forward with a shower of grenades, thus escaping fairly well.

By this time, the enemy had recovered from his initial surprise, and, the 18th Infantry having pushed on to its third objective,—Chaudun,—the 26th and 28th infantries were unable to push across the Soissons-Paris road, on the plateau between Missy and Ploisy. This was largely because of the intense machine gun fire from the flank, sweeping their rear from the ravine of Missy, which the 153d French Division had been unable to take.

Missy Ravine was a thickly-grown tangle of trees and underbrush, laced with barbed-

wire, so as to make it almost entirely impassable. Masked machine guns enfiladed every inch of the ground, which was likewise swampy. It was therefore useless for tanks to attack the enemy positions. From the ravine, the open, level country, devoid of cover or buildings, and cut only by the Soissons-Paris roadway, sloped away, finally dropping suddenly into Ploisy Ravine. This plateau was cut by many sunken roads, which afforded admirable concealment for the enemy machine gunners.

The enemy, during the night of July 18th, threw his 34th Division into line between Missy and Ploisy, between the 11th Bavarian and the 42d Divisions, and also put his 28th Division into the head of the Chazelle Ravine, before Chaudun. This was done to prevent the cutting of the Soissons-Paris road.

The 1st Division's objective line was set between Berzy-le-Sec, on the heights of the Crise Valley and the important railways and roads within its valley, and extending southeastward to Buzancy. This division therefore sent the 16th and 18th Infantries forward to Chazelle, half way between Chadun and the Soissons-Paris railway. The attack began at four o'clock of the 19th of July. Meantime, the 26th and 28th Infantries, half-crazed by thirst, galled by a frontal fire from Ploisy Ravine and by the rearward fire from the Missy Ravine, could not cross the Paris-Soissons roadway. A section of French tanks waddled forward to support them, but

these were shot to pieces on the edge of the Ploisy Ravine,—reminding one of the famous light brigade at Balaklava:

"Their's not to reason why,
Their's not to make reply,
Their's but to do or die,
Into the Valley of death,
Into the mouth of hell,
Rode the six hundred."

As the front lay almost at right angles to the lines of the sector at this time, it was clearly necessary to re-align the front. Therefore, a savage attack was driven forward at 5.30 in the evening, by the 2d Brigade, for the clearing of the head of Ploisy Ravine. The ranks were torn by shells and machine gun fire, but they reached the ravine, leaping at the flaming guns and tearing their way through the enemy lines, taking Ploisy Village and the ravine head. During the night, in pitchy blackness, in the vicinity of the stone-walled Courmelles Farm, a bitter struggle was waged. "A struggle of squads and little knots of men creeping and listening for one another; of quick, snarling rushes and dull blows; of sudden, blinding flashes of machine gun or rifle, through the Stygian blackness." So relates Captain Hanson, of the A. E. F. historical section.

But the Yanks maintained their advance through Courmelles Farm, to the rim of Ploisy Ravine,—the last barrier between them and the battered heights of Berzy-le-Sec.

And beyond lay the Crise Valley, with its steep slopes, covered with pine trees, and the road which ran parallel to the railway line through Soissons, past Courmelles Farm, in the 153d French Division's sector, and about 2 miles northeast by north of Berzy-le-Sec.

Set on a hillside is Berzy-le-Sec, with a broken forest nestling close at the foot of the hill,—a battered village, silhouetted against the sunset. And below it were wheat-fields,—dotted with those blood-red poppies of France! All a bit of typical French countryside.

If one will carefully examine the map and apply what little knowledge of military science that he may possess, combined with a slight knowledge of tactical problems, it is easily seen that, should the Americans succeed in taking Berzy, it would mean that the Soissons-Oulchy le Chateau railway and the Soissons-Chateau Thierry highway could no longer be used for transport into the Marne salient from Soissons,—the railhead. In short, the salient would be lost, as Berzy was the key to it, as well as the salient between the Vesle and Marne Rivers, and which would now become untenable.

Therefore, the enemy threw into the line protecting this village and its important heights another division,—the 46th Reserve.

Knowing that the 153d French Division was still too far from the village to strike, being still engaged on the far side of the Ploisy Ravine, the staff of the 20th Corps,

accordingly, ordered the 1st Division to take Berzy-le-Sec at 2 P.M. on July 20th. The 2d Brigade was designated, plus one battalion from the divisional reserve, for the operation.

After a furious barrage of two hours' duration, noon until 2 P.M., the lines moved forward, striking at Berzy and the spur north of it. As our lines advanced, the ruins of Berzy, the hill and roadways literally spat fire in our faces, while shrapnel burst with its sinister and spiteful crack above our heads. Time after time, throughout the afternoon and night, the lines surged back and forth in attack and counter-attack. Machine gun nests were taken and retaken, and the opposing infantry grappled with one another with bayonets and trench-knives, grenades and clubbed rifles.

Berzy was still in the possession of the enemy at sunset of July 20th. "Through the night its guns, like those of a beleagued fortress, continued to flame. In it stood at bay the last German garrison of that plateau south of Soissons, with the whole western front of the Marne salient pinned upon it, which had been for so long a black menace over Paris."

Finally, early on the morning of the 21st, after artillery preparation of three hours or more, and which reduced Berzy practically to ruins,—heaps of ruins,—the Yanks advanced again. This was to be their supreme effort and the first wave rose up and rolled toward, into and over the ruins of the village.

Machine guns spat in their faces from the ruins ahead; yet they drove through the village, past the ruined church and along the flaming street to the Crise Valley. Here they looked down along the Chateau-Thierry road, parallel to the stream for a distance, to Soissons, in the midst of its hills.

The victory was won!

The 1st Brigade had already advanced across the Soissons-Chateau Thierry road, and was advancing down the valley of the Crise, the city and yards of Soissons were open to artillery fire, while the 26th Infantry lay on the plateau in a maze of sunken roads.

Then, during the night of July 22d, in the Crise Valley beyond Berzy-le-Sec, the 1st Division was relieved by the 15th Scottish Division of the British forces, and sent backward to Dommartin, northeast of Paris, for a rest. The 1st Division had suffered 7,000 casualties,—1,816 by the 28th Infantry alone,—not a single man being taken by the enemy; sixty per cent. of its infantry officers were killed or wounded; in addition to the killed and wounded enemy, it had taken 3,500 prisoners, 86 field guns, numbers of machine guns, munitions and other material of war, and had advanced eleven kilometers in four days, against the untiring efforts of parts of seven enemy divisions, and broke the hinge of the enemy's defensive line between the Aisne and the Marne.

We shall now see how the 2d Division fought its way forward in the great July attack,

past the Foret de Villers-Cotterets, Vaux-castille Ravine, Bois de Leonore, the village of Vierzy, Beaurepaire Farm, Chevigny Farm, and also find out how it was that the 2d Division did so much toward giving the Marne salient so prominent a place in the history of the war.

CHAPTER V.

The Second Division at Vierzy and in the Foret de Villers-Cotterets.

If the reader could journey to the stretch of countryside that lies southwest of Soissons he would find himself standing in the midst of a land that has been mutilated almost beyond belief. Everywhere are trenches, pillboxes and observation posts, but hardly any signs of human habitation,—mere shells of homes that have long since been pounded into shapeless masses of stone and mortar,—for he would be standing in a part of the battle-fields which have witnessed some of the most terrific fighting of the whole conflict.

Upon this tortured land, where once throbbed the life of industry and echoed the laughter of children, armies have struggled, staggered, died as the reeling and bending lines, like waves of the sea, swept back and forth under the smashing charges and counter-attacks of desperate, maddened men. Silence now reigns over the fearful wilderness where only a few short months ago the roar of artillery, the whine of shells, and the crack of rifles, mingled with the shrieks of the mangled and the moans of the dying in an inferno of destruction. A tree, here and there, shattered and broken, with branches

torn and twisted, still stands,—gaunt specter of death which had swept across the plains.

Such is the setting for the theatre of fighting of the 2d Division during the initial stage of the July counter attack of 1918.

Fresh from the terrible and bloody fighting in its sector northwest of Chateau-Thierry, with the proud record of its fight at Bouresches and in the Bois de Belleau, the 2d Division was relieved from its support positions on the night of July 16th-17th, being conveyed in motor lorries to a point near Marcilly, on the western side of the Foret de Villers-Cotterets.

Shortly after its arrival there, orders were received for an attack that was to be delivered at 4.35 on the morning of July 18th. This attack was to be delivered on the front which lay along the eastern edge of the Foret de Villers-Cotterets, an immense stretch of forest about ten or more square miles in area, and which lay in the front of the 2d Division. This forest was cut by a network of main and farm roads, which was later the cause of a great deal of trouble and confusion in carrying out the plans of the attack.

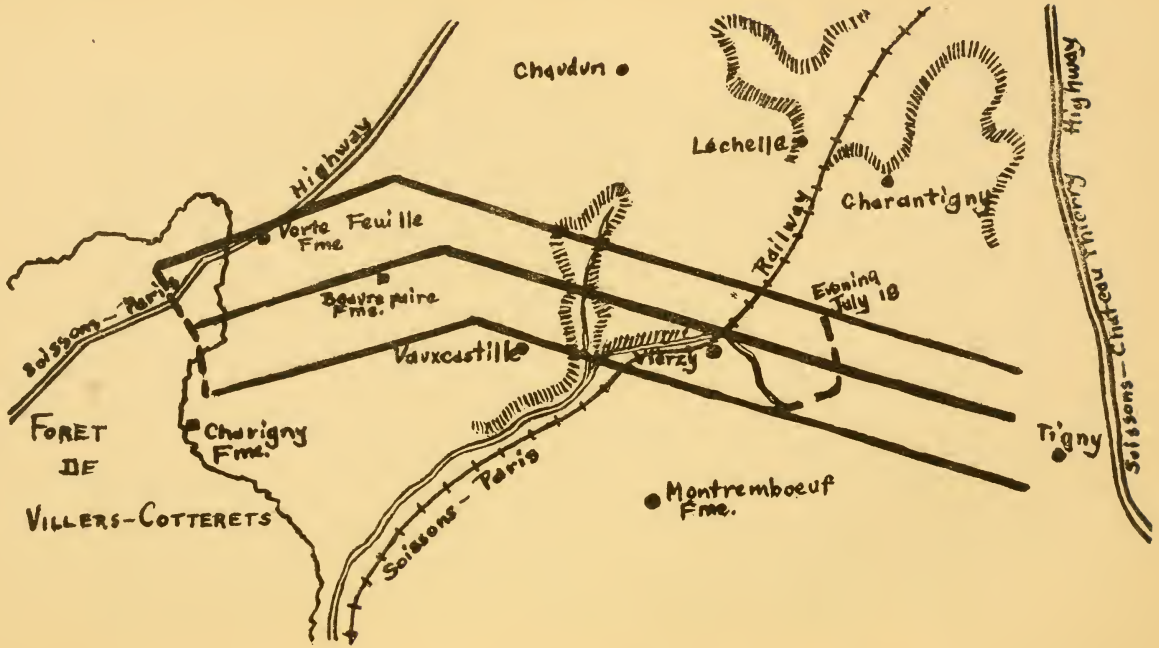
Night had fallen, and with it a driving rain, making the pitchy blackness doubly impenetrable,—in fact so much so that one could not even see the man ahead of him, though he was only a pace or so away. The hour for the advance was rapidly drawing near, and yet the troops were seemingly so much confused that it would be next to the

impossible to have them reach their positions in time for the attack. But they were there.

The artillery barrage fell with a roar and crash on the enemy positions, as day was breaking. The first line battalions of the 23d Infantry on the right and the 9th Infantry and 5th Marines on the left, went over behind it. Breathless and staggering from over a mile and a half of double-time, they reached their places at the appointed minute, and then hurled themselves upon the first line enemy trenches,—like great gray specters coming out of the dawn.

Lying on the edge of the forest near Chavigny Farm, on the right, and Carrefour des Fourneaux on the left, the 2d Division sector ran northeast for one and a half miles over open, rolling country, across Verte Feuille and Beaurepaire Farms. Then it swung to the right, using the hill west of Vauxcastille as a pivot, and narrowing gradually, ran eastward and a bit south across the ravine of Vauxcastille and the Bois de Leonore north of it; then on to the ravine and village of Vierzy, where it crossed the Paris-Soissons railway tunnel. From this point, crossing a high, flat ridge, devoid of buildings but intersected by some farm roads, it crossed the main Soissons-Chateau Thierry road between the villages of Taux and Hartennes, ending in the Bois d'Hartennes.

The enemy counter-barrage fire opened at once, but the 2d Battalion of the 23d Infantry, using rifles only as weapons, was on



Second Division Sector on July 18th.

their first objective line,—Beaurepaire Farm, —less than a quarter of an hour after going over the top. The 9th Infantry and the 5th Marines had also reached their line.

Having reached this line, the 2d Division now plunged into the ravine of the Bois Leonore and Vauxcastille, fought its way across the marshy woods and up over the embankment of the Paris-Soissons railway. Then, after a brief but sanguinary battle with enemy infantry and machine guns, pushed onward to the plateau overlooking Vierzy.

Advancing in sectors parallel to that of the 2d Division, the 1st Moroccan Division, on the left, advancing toward Lachelle and the ravines beyond, and the 38th French Division, on the right, striking in the direction of Montremboeuf Farm, fought their way forward as the 2d Division (American) was advancing in its own sector.

As the 2d Division had already entered the western side of the village of Vierzy, and although it was practically surrounded,—north, west, and a bit on the south sides,—the enemy still clung determinedly to the rest of the village. They also put up stiff machine gun resistance from dugouts and in the Vauxcastille Ravine, where our troops of the support waves encountered determined resistance. Our casualties were, therefore, quite severe.

Nevertheless, although the men had been without food or water for over a day, the

advance was pushed forward at once in the direction of the Bois d'Hartennes. At the same time, a renewed attack was made upon Vierzy. In this attack, the 9th and 23d Infantries went forward, being later supported by the French tanks and one battalion of the Moroccans. At eight in the evening our advance again encountered very stubborn resistance, more especially from the intensity of the enemy artillery and machine gun fire.

Our lines pushed on about two miles, until the 9th Infantry was on the plateau south of Charantigny and the 23d Infantry halfway between Vierzy and Tigny. Our right wing was bent southwest, presenting its whole front a pronounced salient across open ground, with the enemy on the south and east of it.

Vierzy was taken, but the ground was covered with wounded, and it was deemed impossible to further advance. Accordingly, those who remained dug-in, and then the men of the 102d Engineers, following their prerogative as engineers of digging all night and fighting all day, advanced through the remnants of the 9th Infantry and 6th Marines, and began to drive forward again. This advance reached Tigny, where, on the edge of the Bois d'Hartennes and about three-fourths of a mile from the Soissons-Chateau Thierry road, the remnants of the engineers were brought to a stop. They entrenched

themselves, and, with machine guns, held every inch of their gains.

That is the kind of stuff the men of the engineer regiments were made of,—they could construct, destruct or fight with equal ability,—and most of the time, they were working all night and then sent in to fight all day!

The 2d Division's casualties had now reached such numbers as to almost exhaust even their wonderful driving power. It had been reduced to about half its strength,—the 23d Infantry having 37 officers and 1,478 men left out of 99 officers and 3,400 men.

Here the 2d Division was relieved by the 58th French Division during the night of the 19th-20th, resting till noon the next day, in the forest.

The 2d Division had advanced 7 miles in 26 hours,—one of its regiments, the 23d Infantry, took 2,175 prisoners from 11 different enemy divisions. This regiment also took two batteries of 150mm guns, five batteries of 77mm guns, one battery of 210mm, about 100 machine guns and 15,000 rounds of 77mm ammunition.

And that sort of fighting which the Boche learned from the Yanks of the 2d Division in the Foret de Villers-Cotterets, in July, 1918, was the thing that scared the Germans to death.

CHAPTER VI.

The "Yankee" Division Holds the Pivot at Bouresches.

As has already been brought out in the preceding chapter, the 26th or "Yankee" Division had been entrusted with a most delicate and tedious part of the operations during the counter-stroke of July, 1918. This operation consisted of marking time and acting as the pivot for the troops which were operating around the Foret de Villers-Cotterets, while those troops were hammering in the western bulge of the front and straightening it out for the swing northward like a gate closing on the Vesle.

The Yankee Division was under the command of Major General C. R. Edwards, at this time, and consisted of the 51st Infantry Brigade, consisting of the 101st and 102d Infantries and 102d Machine Gun Battalion; the 52d Infantry Brigade, with the 103d and 104th Infantries and the 103d Machine Gun Battalion; the 51st Field Artillery Brigade, with the 101st, 102d and 103d Field Artillery Regiments, and the 101st Engineers and other divisional troops.

The "Yankee" Division had already become highly veteran in all of the various departments and branches of trench warfare,

for it had been in the line, during the preceding winter along the historic Chemin des Dames, entering that sector on February 6th, 1917, and remaining there for fifty days. Then, too, it had spent eighty-six more days in the American "Old Home Sector," northwest of Toul. It was the first American division, not regular army, to take part in a great offensive operation, and it also took part in every other great offensive operation until the ending of hostilities. A record, indeed, to be proud of, and one which placed the 26th Division in the first place among the National Guard units that took part in our history overseas.

To say the least, the country northwest of Chateau-Thierry was not a very pleasant sort of place to be during those ever-memorable days of mid-July, 1918. It was a series of shallow and incomplete trenches, extending from near Vaux and Bouresches, around east and the northern edges of the Bois de Belleau (Belleau Wood), to a point near Bussiares. These positions were under constant harassing fire from enemy batteries, and likewise many enemy machine guns and snipers were comfortably installed all along the edges of the woods, banks of the Ru Gobert Creek, and in the ruined villages of Torcy and Belleau, close to our front lines.

The 26th Division took over these lines during the night of July 16th, and immediately that ever-present and necessary phase of trench-life known as "raiding" set in.

As the majority of my readers have never been out there in the darkness of the trench areas, where the lights that come and go are only the fitful brilliancy of the flares and signals or the sputter of the angry little hidden machine guns; where the slightest unguarded move means almost certain death, perhaps it would be well to try to picture to them just what a raid is like.

With the lengthening of the shadows, and the setting of the sun behind the purple crests of the torn hillsides of Picardy, the whole face of the fighting is changed, for now the men creep out through the mists and shadows into No Man's Land, there to meet other men, face to face and hand to hand, and then, occur the slight patrol engagements of the raiding parties. Quite naturally, these raids, for the most part, are never mentioned in the communiques of the day, but they nevertheless form an important part of the intelligence work of the fighting forces, for it is during these raids that prisoners are taken and much useful information obtained.

Night life along the front is both weird and at the same time very picturesque. There are flares, flares, flares, as far as the eye can see, bursting into brief brilliance and then leaving the night blacker than ever. The slightest unusual movement or suggested alarm sets vari-colored signal rockets hissing from the trenches. Then comes the shattering voice of the vicious machine guns, spraying steel-jacketed pellets of death

with reckless fury. Small parties of men now creep snake-like out through No Man's Land, cut their way through the lines of tangled wire, and then lie in wait just behind the enemy parapets, where they can hear all that is said and all that is going on within the enemy lines. The slightest noise or the grating of a pebble will bring down the fury of the machine guns that are hidden behind the mounds of earth or in the edge of the thickets before you. You lie there, scarcely daring to breathe for fear of being heard by the enemy, and never daring to move until the signal comes. A chain of Verey lights flash upward to the right, lighting up the surrounding country and its maze of trenches and tangled wire with almost the brilliance of broad daylight. Then comes the signal. You throw yourself forward into the enemy line; clean the section of trenches alloted to your section, taking prisoners and then dashing backward across the shell-torn and tangled debris of No Man's Land to your own lines. You drop safely into your own trenches again just as the inevitable retaliatory fire can come from the enemy positions.

Then comes the first faint streak of the coming dawn, and the face of the front is gradually changed, as the heavy mists lift their clinging curtain from the torn and tangled masses of earth and wire that have so lately seen so much feverish activity and such bloody struggling of desperate men.

Such is a raiding party, and many are the tales that the boys of the A. E. F. Combat Divisions can tell of these "parties" too.

After a week of this sort of life, the whole thing quite naturally resolved itself into the same continuous round of monotonous duties, and the men of the 26th Division were eager to have things happen.

And happen they did, and rather rapidly, too, for they received orders on the night of July 17th, calling for an advance the next morning.

The problem which faced the Americans was rather a difficult one, if considered from purely tactical viewpoints, for the "Yankee" Division was to perform the tedious and difficult operation of acting as the pivot, upon which should swing the entire fortunes of the whole series of operations which were to be undertaken by the First Corps in the great battle. This is a most exacting tactical problem, and, in this instance, it was solved as follows: (1) the left of the 26th Division was to attack north and northeast, pivoting on the village of Bouresches, and guiding on the 167th French Division, on its left, but never getting ahead of the 167th, while swinging gradually northeast, until the whole front of the left should have been straightened; (2) having accomplished this maneuver, the 26th was now to attack with the right wing of the division,—half of it eastward and half northward, taking the woods in front, then executing a half-turn to the northeast, to

bring the front into alignment with the general front; (3) from this point the advance was to be carried straight-away.

The division had already been disposed as follows: (1) the 101st Infantry was on the extreme right, near Vaux, and facing northward; (2) the 102d, facing eastward, extending a trifle beyond the village of Bouresches; (3) the 104th, from its position in the Bois de Belleau, faced eastward and northeastward; and (4) the 103d, on the extreme left of the line, facing northeast and north.

Accordingly, at 4.35 o'clock on the morning of July 18th, and under the cover of the neutralization fire laid down by the 101st Field Artillery, the 52d Brigade, advancing three battalions, went through the mists of the morning toward the enemy. The 2d Battalion of the 103d Infantry was advanced in a northeasterly direction from its position in the Bois de Belleau, with the objective of taking the railway line in the creek valley between Bouresches and Belleau villages; the 3d Battalion of the 104th, advancing northward, with objectives set as Belleau village and Givry, as well as the railway line that ran between them; the remaining battalion, the 3d Battalion of the 103d Infantry, on the left of the brigade sector, was to attack northward, with objectives at Torcy and the railway beyond that village.

The 201st Division of von Boehn's Seventh German Army was encountered and surprised, putting the 3d Battalion of the 103d

Infantry inside of Torcy and pushing forward, taking the grade of the railroad and the creek bank. Here the positions were consolidated. The center battalion, the 3d Battalion of the 104th, had already become so confused in inky blackness of the Bois de Belleau that the advance was delayed somewhat. But, when they finally started out of the forest, the enemy, now thoroughly aroused, was pushed backward, as the Yanks cleaned up Belleau and then Givry, with their shining bayonets. Then, having advanced their flanks up the slopes of Hill 193, north of Givry, they continued onward, reaching a point half-way up that hill before they could be stopped.

Hill 193 was found to be untenable, and our troops there were recalled, the enemy gunners re-occupying it, and its commanding positions, from which they poured a withering fire in enfilade westward along the front of the 167th French Division, as well as enfilading our entire front in the creek valley or the hills east of it, as far as Bouresches. This forced the 2d Battalion of the 103d, which had advanced to the railroad and the creek beyond, to retire from the creek line and to cling with the utmost difficulty to the grade of the railroad. Here they dug their fox-holes and stuck!

But, across the fire-swept belt in their rear, it was impossible to bring supplies and ammunition, and after dark, they withdrew to the edge of the woods. However, a detach-

ment of the 102d, which had advanced with them, still managed to retain possession of the slightly less-exposed point of the Bouresches railway station. As for the battalions in Torcy and those in Belleau and Givry, they had not fared so badly where they now lay, although the ground between them and the woods was an inferno.

As for the troops which were being torn to bits by the enfilade fire from Hill 193, there was nothing to do now, that is, nothing except to await the arrival of the French division on the Givry-Monthiers line.

Then, assuming that the French would attack with them, a general advance of the 26th Division was ordered for 3 o'clock of the afternoon of the 20th, with the object of aligning the front facing northeast on the line of crests beyond the valley of the creek and running from Les Brusses Farm (one kilometer west of Belleau), through Hill 190, to La Goneterie Farm.

No preparatory fire was employed, except for an accompanying barrage, and the attack was made with the 51st brigade sending forward the 3d Battalion of the 102d Infantry, northeastward into the Bois de Bouresches. These woods were cleared, then, the 3d Battalion of the 101st, on the right, attacked the Bois de la Halmardiere, north of them, echeloning on left, and thus swinging itself facing northeast also.

In the left sector, the 52d Brigade had a much harder fight, due to the shifting of

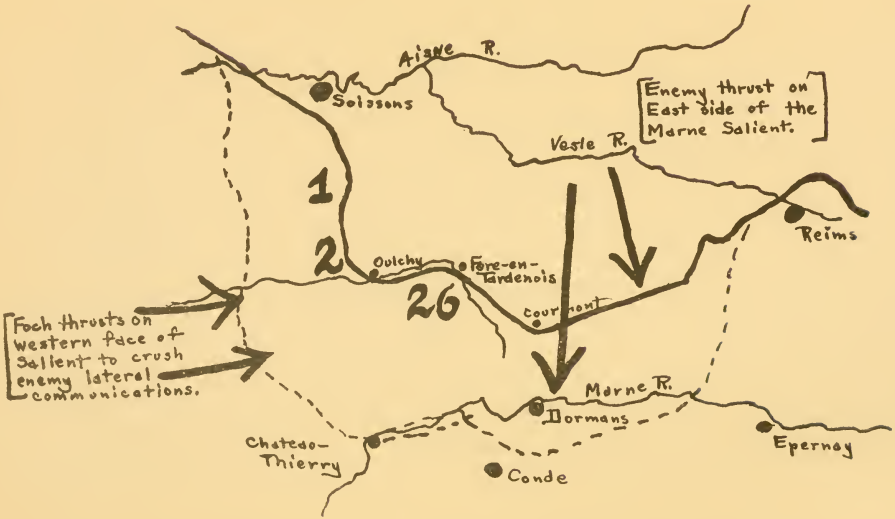
battalions under enemy fire from their north front in order to send forward their attack eastward. This involved cautious maneuvering. They advanced, however, from Belleau, up the railway, across the creek and took Les Brusses Farm. At the same time the 1st Battalion of the 103d advanced from Bois de Belleau until they had dug themselves in firmly in possession of Hill 190, as well as being in liaison with troops in the Bois de Bouresches, by six o'clock that evening.

The French, however, could not take Hill 193, in spite of the fact that they made several magnificent attacks, and therefore, all during the night, the enemy guns swept the American lines, isolating the battalion at Les Brusses Farm.

But the main part of the problem had been worked out, and, July 21st, the enemy, repulsed on a front of about sixty miles, and fearing that they might be pocketed in the Chateau-Thierry salient, was in full retreat.

"Now it was that, leaving behind them at last the woods and the fields in which for more than seven weeks, while the wheat ripened and the poppies bloomed and faded, the doggedness of America had been pitted against the stubbornness of Germany, the 26th swept forward in pursuit."

Shall we men of the A. E. F. ever forget those multitudes of blood-red waving poppies of Picardy and Artois and Flanders? Poppies in those broad French wheat-fields, on those pleasant slopes of France; poppies



Map showing famous "Marne Pocket" at end of July Counter (July 18th).

which every day became a deeper blood-red. nodding and dancing in the soft breezes of summer, while above them the skylarks sang lilting, liquid tunes, during that wonderful and most beautiful month of all the year, in any country and in any clime,—June! Poppies reddening in the fields along the roadway that led over that rolling French countryside toward the little town of Monthiers, seemingly unmindful of the spiteful rattle as the machine guns played from their masked coverts! Over those same poppies, too, rang the sharp and singing song of the shrapnel, as it greets the coming morning, among the bruised and shell-torn fields of Artois.

And oh, how those stalwart and brave Yankee lads used to love those tiny blood-red poppies of Flanders! And how they used to press them in their letters to the home-folks, or else place them gently within the sacred little folder where they kept those pictures of the loved ones! And how they used to wear them next their hearts as they leaped to the big advance, down through the poppied wheatfields to the flaming woods ahead. And, then, as the sunset with its mellow light, came to bathe the torn and tortured world of their existence, broken and bruised and trampled, the tiny poppies had likewise shared in the day of victory,—broken and bruished and dead as were their brave knights in khaki whose helms they had decorated in the fray! And, yonder in the woodland, where the flashing rifles and bay-

onets shine in the sunset glow, still other "Knights of the Poppies" were holding the line with their files.

"Poppies in the wheatfields;
How still beside them lie
Scattered forms that stir not
When the star-shells burst on high,
Gently o'er them bending
Beneath the moon's soft glance,
Poppies in the wheatfields
On the ransomed hills of France."

(Author unknown.)

All day long on July 21st, the Yankee Division marched across country in columns, headed by advance guards, as the old I. D. R. required, and not until evening, after a march of nearly nine kilometers had led the advance far across the Soissons-Chateau Thierry highway, that heavy machine gun fire stopped the forward movement and brought the warning that the enemy had made a stand in the broad, shallow creek valley in which lie the tiny villages of Trugny and, one kilometer north of it, Epieds.

East of these villages, up the gently sloping fields, stood the Bois de Trugny, filled with enemy machine guns.

In the heavy mists of the gray morning of July 22d, the 26th Division attacked, driving forward one battalion each of the 103d and 104th toward Epieds, two and one-half battalions of the 102d against Trugny, and

two battalions of the 101st moving along the Bois de Barbillon, to flank those villages.

Our batteries, further to the rear, did not know very definitely where the front was, and could not, therefore, deliver a very effective barrage, while the enemy artillery, adjusted by their planes, deluged our lines with gas and high explosives.

An enemy strong point at La Gouttiere Farm, in the 167th French sector, which galled our troops on the left flank and rear, proved highly annoying to the advance, but on they went, on the left and center, into the edges of the villages before they were turned back. The 101st Machine Gun Battalion, skirting with its infantry, the Bois de Barbillon, penetrated the Bois de Trugny, and when finally forced backward by concentrated fire, stopped defiantly directly south of Trugny and stayed there, a thorn in the enemy flank.

Three battalions of the 52d Brigade repeated the attack on the left during the afternoon, but La Gouttiere Farm was still in the hands of the enemy. The French division was being engaged bitterly beating off enemy counters, with the assistance of the 26th American Division Artillery, which had extended its zone of fire entirely across the French sector.

On the morning of July 23d, our artillery dropped destructive fire on the enemy positions, in preparation for an attack on the Bois de Trugny. The 101st Infantry, work-

ing with the 101st Engineers, made the advance, and although slow progress was made at first, the line was pushed into the edge of the woods. Then our positions encountered heavy machine gun concentration in front and on both flanks, which was highly destructive. The attackers, accordingly suffered heavily, being forced to fall back to the other edge of the woods.

The 56th Infantry Brigade, of the 28th Division, was now placed under the command of the 26th, by the Corps command, in order that the driving forward of the attack should not stop. Intelligence headquarters now reported a further enemy withdrawal, and once again the allied forces swept majestically forward across the hills of Artois. The advance of the 26th Division was pushed forward in the direction of the Jaulgonne-Fere en Tardenois highway, northeast of the Bois de Trugny, through the Foret de Fere. Here it was held up by machine gun fire, just west of the road, and which came from the direction of the Croix Rouge Farm, forcing them to dig-in along this line for the night.

Here the 26th Division was relieved by the 42d Division, and the weary "Yankee" Division left the 51st Brigade Artillery and the 101st Engineers to go on with the men of the "Rainbow." The remainder of the 26th were drawn back to the area of Entrepilly, on July 26th.

In its eight days of battle, the "Yankee" Division had advanced eighteen and one-half

kilometers, had taken about 250 prisoners, 4 field pieces, numerous machine guns, and great quantities of ammunition. Its losses were 5,300 men, of whom 600 were killed.

Where the lads of the "Yankee" Division have fallen upon the battle-fields there would they rest, for, to them, there could be no holier hills found than those hills of France to hold the soldier's clay. Deep in the hearts of their fellow-countrymen their fast, firm and immortal sepulcher shall ever be, greater than all the tombs of ancient kings. They have served their country overseas, and loved her,—dying with a heart that sings!

CHAPTER VII.

With Our Second Corps at the Hindenburg Line.

If my readers could be dropped down into the stretch of French countryside that lies along the Canal du Nord, which runs between Saint Quentin and Cambrai, he would see that, after all, for the most part the battle fronts are pretty much alike along the entire line from Switzerland to the turbulent waters of the North Sea. Unnumbered dugouts, many of them made of concrete, still line the roadsides or honeycomb the slopes of the hills. At commanding points, machine gun emplacements and observation posts, constructed alike of masonry, with steel beams and reinforced concrete, stand as lonely sentinels over the desolation they helped to create. Wire entanglements, broken wagons, pieces of artillery, cartridge cases, and fragments of weapons bear mute testimony to the frightfulness of which they were a part.

The devastated area in France and Belgium extends for over three hundred miles. Its average breadth is probably ten miles, and in all this region there is hardly a house but has been either totally destroyed or badly damaged. The gifts of nature and the products of man alike are ravaged by the holocaust of war. Think of the tragedy of it

all! Remember that most of this area was not the scene of one battle alone, but was the cauldron in which, for four years, had been brewed the pottage of the most destructive warfare known to history.

But the rains of the French springtime were coaxing the grasses and daisies forth from their winter coverts,—covering the great gaping scars of war. Daisies nodded their heads in the winds, and masses of poppies,—those poppies of song and story,—gorgeous in their brilliant red, gave warmth and color to the somber scene.

If the reader could have entered the lines with the men of the 27th Division before Le Catelet, on that memorable September morning, 1918, he would have been looking across the rolling French countryside toward perhaps the strongest point in that iron-bound position, behind which the enemy were standing and declaring to the Allied forces: "Thus far you will come, and no farther!"

From a position within the confines of Guillemont Ferme, one looks down across a succession of rolling valleys toward Le Catelet, the objective of some of the units of the 27th Division. To the right of Guillemont Ferme is Claymore Valley, with Dirk Valley at its right, down which the road runs from Malakoff and Quennemont Farms to Bony, which lay just inside of the great bands of wire and trenches of the Hindenburg Line. Quennemont Ferme lies about five or six hundred yards northwest by north of

Malakoff Wood, a tiny patch of woodland, interlaced with the enemy lines of trenches and bands of wire entanglements. Further on, within the enemy positions, one could see the point of the hillside, overlooking the valley of the Escaut River, and likewise the extreme northern end of the great Canal Tunnel, where it begins its three-mile journey under the hillsides that lie before the town of Le Catelet. Such is but a fleeting glance at the terrain over which the men of our own 27th Division were to advance in their attack of September 29th, against the so-called impregnable positions of the Hindenburg Line.

Perhaps it would be well to correct another erroneous impression which has been pretty much broadcast since the ending of the great conflict, viz., that the Hindenburg Line was nothing but a sort of local feature of the sector occupied by the 27th and 30th American Divisions, and some few Australians. Such was not the case, for the Hindenburg Line, which was the enemy's best bet in defensive positions, ran from the seacoast near the Belgian border, the entire length of the western front and ended in the Vosges country near Epinal. It had been constructed with the same care and impregnability throughout its entire length, and was to have been the greatest depth of Allied penetration.

And so it was that, while the majority of our troops were madly fighting through drenching rains, and knee deep in mud of the

Argonne; through swampy ground and deepest forest tangles; driving their lines forward through every conceivable sort of an obstacle, up the slopes of shell-torn hills, only to meet another just beyond,—inch by inch, foot by foot,—as the indomitable Yanks hacked and tore their way through thousands of enemy machine guns,—slogging along through acres of sticky and clinging mud; the others, further north, with the British, were driving forward only because, in the Argonne, the main body of the American Forces were drawing and riveting there the best divisions that badgered Ludendorff could muster.

As one authority puts it: "While the Americans, in their own offensive, were nosing their way through the enemy defenses northwest of Verdun, other American units, fighting side by side with the Australians, for the first time in this war that Yanks and Aussies had lined up together in a major operation, took part in the victorious British advance in Picardy."

To these two divisions went the distinction of playing an important role in fighting which pierced the main defenses of the Hindenburg Line, at a point where that line and barrier of freedom was especially strong and where the enemy was prepared to resist with desperation.

These men fought their way, on the right of the British advance, north of Cambrai and Saint Quentin, with their objectives set at points beyond the line of the Saint Quentin

Canal, on a stretch of front where that waterway, running underground for three miles, passes through what is known as the Bellicourt Tunnel.

The hillcrest just above the tunnel, the only stretch between Saint Quentin and Cambrai where this waterway protection did not exist and where an attack by tanks could be expected, had been fortified with all the care of the German General Staff. The Hindenburg Line in this vicinity was based upon the line of this tunnel, and its steep sides and stone embankments offered a most formidable line of defense. Here the Germans had concentrated troops and machine guns, with strongly defended lines protecting the hill in front.

On entering the tunnel, one found the waterway to be thirty feet wide, with a broad towpath on each side. Caverns had been dug out of the side walls and food and munitions were stored there, while the canal channel was filled with barges, which had been fitted up for troop quarters. In addition to this, there were galleries leading off in several directions and also another gallery above the tunnel itself. Having fitted these numerous barges with bunks and kitchens, the enemy had floated them into the tunnel, and had thus made the hill a literal fortress. Electric lights, telephones, and a water system had been installed. Protected from the heaviest artillery fire by the earth and masonry above them, with each end of the

tunnel blocked by concrete walls, the enemy was secure from all attack. Openings in the roof of the tunnel, through which stairways ran, gave exits for the men when ordered to take the offensive or relieve those in the outlying trenches. At the mouth of the tunnel, lying close together, a correspondent picked up two battered helmets,—one an American, the other a German. What was their story? Where were the men who wore them? Did they meet here on alien soil, far from home, to grapple in a hand-to-hand conflict for supremacy until death sealed the verdict of their fate? Perhaps the answer lies buried in some unknown grave.

The Americans started their attack at 5.50 o'clock on the morning of September 29th, having previously fought their way to their jumping-off places, taking, a few days before, Guillemont Ferme, Quennemont Ferme, and a little hill known merely as "The Knoll," all outpost positions of the Hindenburg Line.

That arrogant system of defenses was regarded by the enemy as impregnable for it was constructed over miles and miles of hills and valleys, thorny with machine guns, honeycombed with mines and all sorts of enemy traps, and symbolizing all the pride, arrogance, treachery and invulnerability of the German war-lords. "Look at our Hindenburg Line—it stands—it is unconquered! Deutschland uber alles! Gott strafe Amerika!" Such was no doubt the cry of many of the enemy press agents, but you will all

very well remember that this hue and cry was done before the 29th of September, 1918.

Let us realize fully that Marshal Foch absolutely knew the possibility or possibilities of this system of defenses; knew their value to the enemy spirit in the homes of the peasants beyond the Rhine. Therefore it became his great object during the later months of the war, to bring this ever-increasing strain that had been telling so terribly on the spirit of the German people to such a point that it could not hold out any longer.

Accordingly, we can recall how Foch drove forward his invincible Allied drive during the summer months of 1918, beginning with the great counterstroke of July 18th, when he drove his legions against Ludendorff and smashed up his flanks and center quite badly. Then, on September 12th, he had sent forward the First American Army, under General Pershing, in its first entirely American offensive, in Saint Mihiel, with such results as the Allied chiefs themselves had never dreamed of.

One authority had put the situation and also endeavoured to place the part played by our boys at the Hindenburg Line in a quite enlarged and highly magnified aspect, which I am sure even the boys themselves of our 27th Division will smile at and pass by as the prattle of one who was rather high-spirited and over-enthusiastic. He says:

"The British, Canadians, and Australians, with the American troops called upon to

carry the ball across Hindy's goal line were entrusted with the most considerable thrust between the Meuse and the North Sea."

Such was not the case at all, and, as my mission in this work is to tell the story of the American forces, with impartiality and accuracy, sticking closely to the official reports and accounts of these operations, I shall place the breaking of the Hindenburg Line in its true historical perspective, as set forth in official circles, by men who know far more about its relation to the great Allied smash than any other men in the whole world,—the men who planned and executed that smash.

These men, under the unified leadership system which Marshal Foch had organized under his command, planned the great Allied smash which was to be thrown against the enemy at strategic points in the long-drawn battle-line. As the official report of this phase of allied operations puts it: "Every army performing its part as an intermeshing cog, without whose action the whole might stop."

On September 21st, General Franchet d'Esprey's allied forces struck a smashing and final blow to Bulgaria on the Macedonian front, and on the 24th of September, General Allenby's British Army broke through in Palestine,—thus putting Bulgaria and Turkey out of it. Then, on the 24th of October, the Italians battered the Austrian defenses to pieces along the Piave and in the

Trentino, binding the enemy by a dictated armistice.

On the extreme left of the western front in France and Belgium, the Belgian and British armies were instructed to keep up their pressure against the German right,—that section of the Armies of the Central Powers that was under the command of the Crown Prince of Bavaria. The French, in the center, were to keep on hammering against the Armies of the German Crown Prince, consisting of the First, Second, Seventh and Eighteenth Armies, which made up his Gruppen.

Now let us quote again from the official sources: "But the real blows were to be struck on the right, where the entire force of the American machine was to be pitted against the German Third Army, under von Einem and the right of the Fifth Army under the command of von der Marwitz, these blows being intended to smash their way through the lines of the German Armies and cut the communications from the vicinity of Montmedy on through to Sedan."

Thus it can be clearly seen that, contrary to the ideas of historians who were entirely unfamiliar with the workings and plannings of the allied commands, the really great fight,—and, as a matter of fact, the greatest fight that American troops ever have engaged in during the entire history of our country, was planned and fought in the mud of the Argonne, and that section which lies between

the Meuse River line and the western extremity of the Argonne plateau.

This does not detract one whit, however, from the wonderful work which was accomplished by our men of the 27th and 30th Divisions, who were operating with our Second Corps, with the British, in the vicinity of the Bellicourt tunnel of the Hindenburg system. These facts that I have enumerated above, serve only to set us right in regard to the place that this fight held in the great allied offensive that led finally to victory, in the last few months of 1918.

For the sake of getting things well in mind, it might be well to enumerate the construction of the 27th Division, as it fought in France. The 27th Division consisted of the following units: The 105th, 106th, 107th and 108th Infantry Regiments; the 104th, 105th and 106th Machine Gun Battalions; the 104th, 105th and 106th Regiments of Field Artillery; the 102d Trench Mortar Battery; the 102d Engineers, and other divisional and staff troops.

These were the troops of the 27th Division which faced that impregnable system of enemy defenses, as they entered the line on that September evening in 1918.

The allied staffs already had in their possession a German staff book which went into minutest detail in regard to the construction of the boasted Hindenburg Line, and which made bold to state that the section in the

vicinity of Bellicourt tunnel was the hardest for any attacking force to assault.

The outer defenses, as we have mentioned before, consisted of several lines of trenches, protected by masses of wire, as well as three strong points,—the Knoll, Quennemont Farm and Guillemont Farm, to say nothing of light and heavy machine guns, minenwerfer of all sizes, and concealed batteries everywhere. Likewise, at Guillemont Farm, the enemy had installed a most powerful flamenwerfer or flame-projector system. Such was the main part of the construction of the ground, which the enemy had extended to a depth of six miles, gullied and harrowed and literally strewn with hidden machine guns, which only spoke when our waves were at their mouths.

Major General O'Ryan, commanding, set up his divisional P. C. in a chalk quarry at Saint Emilie, some few thousand yards behind the front, and, in accordance with the usual Flanders weather,—rain,—which is one of the greatest products of that part of France —had turned the roads into quagmires of slippery and clinging mud. And always and seemingly forever, roared the snarling and growling British guns, wiping out enemy works and pulverizing enemy defenses.

No one who has never been at the battle area, under wartime conditions, can appreciate how pulsingly filled with restrained eagerness the men of these units were,— that unconquerable Yankee spirit that even

the drenching rains of France could not dampen! Then is the time, when man talks to man confidentially of little secrets; of the bright lights of the little old town back there among the hills of the Empire State; of familiar places around Times Square or Herald Square, and how they know their friends were back there enjoying the light and warmth, and then it is that they begin to talk of their chances of getting back there once more to "carry on" there with the same vigor and dash that they were "carrying on" that night in Picardy mud and rain!

Out across No Man's Land, some four thousand yards ahead of them, lay the formidable system of the Canal Tunnel, while on their right lay the men of the 30th American Division, flanked by the French 10th Army, while the 3d British Corps was on their left.

The operations which were destined to end in the breaking of the Canal Tunnel line, began with a machine gun barrage by companies A, C and D of the 105th Machine Gun Battalion, with Company B covering Tombois Road. The 104th Machine Gun Battalion was held in reserve to take over the support positions at the critical time. This machine gun preparation was followed by the artillery preparation, which fell upon the enemy positions at 5.20 on the morning of September 27th, and at which time the 106th Infantry, composing the attacking party, in conjunction with flank protection by one

battalion of the 105th Infantry, on their left, affording flank protection against the enemy positions in the vicinity of Vendhuile.

The enemy tank traps took a heavy toll,—out of some forty tanks going forward in the attack, only a dozen came back. Scores of men of the 106th Infantry fell before the withering fire of the enemy machine guns, which presented a veritable net-work of cross-fire in their front. But the advance was maintained, and the lines, though torn and rent by a tornado of exploding enemy shells, kept moving. At points in the immediate vicinity of Knoll Farm, the struggle for the mastery was particularly severe and bloody, and the shell-torn and crumbling ruins of the farm changed hands four times before the enclosure was finally strewn with the dead and dying of both sides, although the enemy dead outnumbered our own by dozens. The fighting continued all day, with the combating lines of bloody and snarling and vicious men continually at each other's throats, and, when the darkness finally settled down over the countrysides of Picardy, the 106th Infantry had been reduced to a small body of worn and weary, bloodstained and gasping humans, who continued to cling with the bull-dog tenacity of the Yanks to the gains which the sanguinary struggle of the day had netted them.

On the morning of the 28th of September, having planned the taking of the enemy strong points at Quennemont and Guille-

mont Farms and The Knoll, which were necessary for jumping-off points for the main attack, the divisional command sent forward the 107th and 108th Infantry Regiments, to the relief of the weary 106th, and the struggle for these positions was continued. All day long the seething lines of steel and battling humanity surged backward and forward in deadly combat, men dying in tens and scores in the vicinity of the strong points at Guillemont and Quennemont Farms. But the positions were taken as planned, and night saw the men of the 27th Division consolidating their positions in these points.

At 5.50 o'clock, on the morning of September 29th, thirty-five guns of the 105th Machine Gun Battalion opened a deadly barrage over the heads of the infantry, with the Tunnel as its target, firing for one-half hour, at the rate of two hundred rounds per minute.

Then, as the first streaks of the coming dawn began to filter over the torn and bruised French hillsides, came the greatest barrage of the entire war from the British guns. A veritable cataract of steel and fire leaped from the muzzles of our guns and fell upon the enemy positions of "Hindy;" over went the men of the 27th, fighting like demons every inch of the way; snarling, growling, frenzied Huns forced into the most desperate fighting of their lives,—the fight to hold their oft-boasted Hindenburg Line,—fought fiercely, and held tenaciously to their positions, until the dash and unbeatable spirit of the men of

the 27th pushed their waves forward and made the positions untenable.

The attack was synchronized with those of the French and British on the south and north flanks, and a squadron of forty tanks lumbered noisily forward toward the fire-spitting nests ahead, but were soon put out of the fighting by traps. Some of the enemy wire had escaped the preparatory fire of our batteries, and accordingly, the 102d Engineers moved forward, in advance of the infantry, and placed rolls of wire similar to "chicken-wire" over the enemy entanglements, and allowed the infantry to advance over these bands of wire and into the "impregnable" positions beyond. Heavy mists and smoke entirely over-spread the countryside, as the men of the 107th and 108th Infantries swept forward against the frowning positions of "Hindy" that seemed to scowl menacingly upon them just ahead. But they continued their advance, in face of strong enemy flank fire, as well as fierce enemy attacks on their front, rear and flank, and a terrible counter by enemy reserves from Vendhuile, against the left of their sector, with the purpose of rolling up and crushing the American attack. These counters were met by the 105th Infantry, whose duty it was to shatter them, the enemy, nevertheless, operating on this flank, holding back the 27th Division's left, and delivering repeated hurricanes of fire and men against our positions.

Concrete pill-boxes had been strewn throughout the enemy positions in great quantities, and these were put out of action by the tanks, or, more often, encircled by the men of the 107th and 108th Infantries, and the defenders slain with grenades. It happened, too, that many times, after the initial attacking waves had advanced over some of the tunnel terrain, enemy reserves would emerge from hidden air-shafts behind them and pour a withering fire upon them as they advanced. These underground shafts were of great importance to the enemy, as they of necessity prolonged their fight and increased the major casualties of the attackers.

By two o'clock in the afternoon, our troops had taken the southern entrance of the tunnel, were in possession of Bellicourt, Nauroy and Cabaret Wood Farm, and before four o'clock they had entered Gouy, with the fields in their rear strewn with their valiant dead.

Every road that led from the vicinity of the fighting to the rear, and more especially to the dressing stations, was trod by weary and worn and bruised and bleeding sons of the Empire State, who had come three thousand miles to show the Boche that pride and arrogance could not aspire to rule the affairs of men. Quennemont and Guillemont Farms had lost their peace-time quietude and had been turned into veritable hells-on-earth; their farmyards carpeted with the dead and dying; their great flagstones

stained with the reddening stains of newly-spilled blood; their great walls torn and crumbling, and emitting the odors of battle, and the smell of human blood and scorching flesh and gas, and everywhere—the dead. Here men had died in scores, silencing the enemy guns.

Evening came, and the reddening glow of the setting sun, as it fell behind the hills to the west, found the doughboys established in Bony, while one battalion, having advanced far beyond its objective, had entered Gouy; and then the Australians "leap-frogged" through them, and carried on.

The battalion in Gouy was cut off and entirely surrounded, but clung steadily to their positions, in spite of the fact that the rear was combed by shell-fire and machine gun bullets, and across this area no communication could be established. They were attacked from the front, rear, and both flanks, to say nothing of being fired on from the airplanes of the enemy which were constantly circling overhead, but they held their positions for eight hours. However, rumors began to reach Saint Emilie that this battalion had been lost, and those seemed to be borne out by the statement of a German officer who said that his men alone had taken prisoner over one hundred men in the vicinity of Guillemont Farm. General O'Ryan dismissed him with the words: "Take him away, he lies!"

Some of the stories of this battalion were to the effect that they had attempted to surrender and had been ambushed; that they had all been killed outright, and finally, that they had been taken. The fact was that, as they advanced, the enemy had poured from concealed passages in their rear and shot down scores of them. Finally, they were discovered by a bunch of Australians, and, with a cry for revenge in their hearts, the men of this "lost battalion" dashed forward again with the "Aussies" and stuck with them.

Some idea of the severity of the fighting can be realized when the authentic statement is made that one company of the 107th Infantry went into the fight with 212 men and came out with only 12 men unwounded. When some of the 107th units had been torn to shreds, they had to retire to support positions and the 108th advanced, bombing out dugouts and positions in the main system and taking more than their own strength in prisoners, keeping these men with them, and at the same time fighting off severe enemy counters.

Then came the Australians, bringing relief to the weary men of the 27th Division, many of whom went forward with them, refusing to get out of the fighting, although many of their outfits had been torn to shreds.

And so it is that our pledge has been kept "on Flanders Fields!" It has been kept as our lines leaped forward over the top, as

the faint streaks of coming day tinged the roseate east, as the lines of stalwart youths advanced to do or die—determined that no price, however high, should be deemed too great to insure the people of bleeding France that

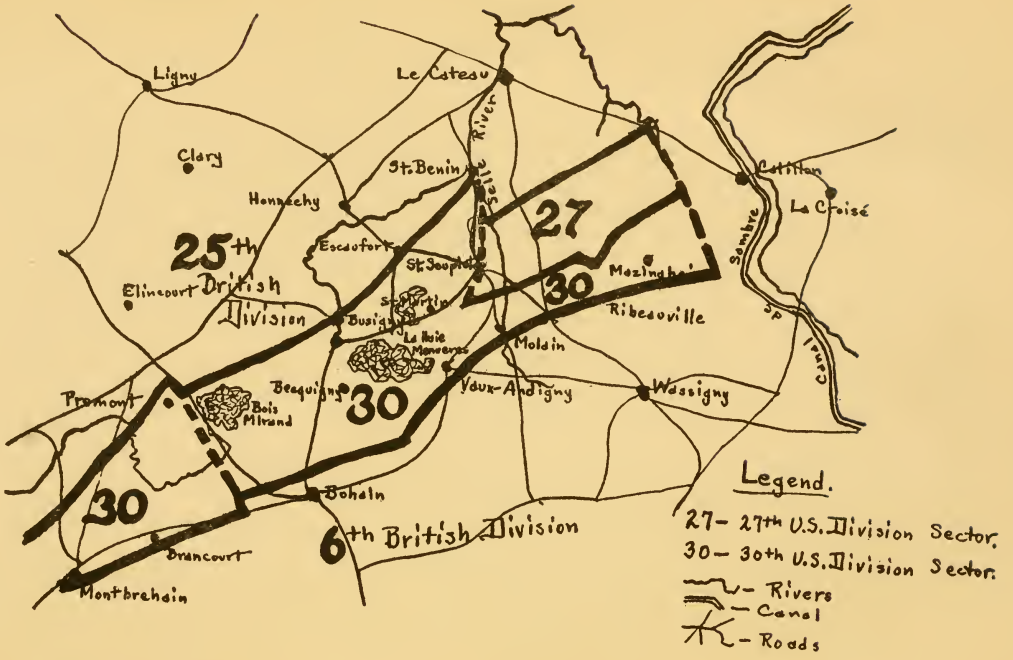
"Poppies should bloom and keep their place
On Flanders Fields."

Under the lilies of France they lie, silently sleeping their last long sleep, as the soft breezes of coming spring murmur a soothing lullaby as they pass over the scarred fields,—fields scarred by the shell-craters of the fighting hosts, and scarred, too, with the graves of heroes.

Having accomplished the seemingly impossible, the 27th Division was relieved, and sent to the rear areas for a brief rest, before being returned to the line for the dash of October.

The enemy had taken up prepared positions along the line of the Selle River, and were completing preparations for determined resistance. The 27th and 30th Divisions, returning, took over the front and immediately made careful reconnaissances.

On October 8th, the 30th Division, from its positions just east of Montbrehain, between Cambrai and Saint Quentin, stood ready to begin a new drive which should carry it across the Selle River and in the direction of the Canal de Sambre. The di-



How the 27th and 30th Divisions drove forward south of Cambrai. (Sept. 29th to Oct. 11th).

rection of this advance must, of necessity, be toward the northeast, across rolling country.

The enemy put up strong machine gun resistance at the villages and farms that lay scattered through the countryside, and it was therefore considered highly probable that strong resistance and also the most bitterly-fought defense could be looked for beyond the Selle River line. Accordingly, a general attack was made by the 1st French Army, and the 4th British Army, of which the 2d American Corps was a part. This army was disposed with the 9th British Corps on the right, the 2d American Corps in the center, and the 13th British Corps on the left. Then came the 3d British Army, on the extreme left.

The attack was accompanied with a rolling barrage and tanks, the 30th Division attacking with the 117th Infantry on its right, the 118th Infantry on the left. The enemy put down a strong counter-barrage, but the heavy mists of the morning favored the attackers, and except for heavy fighting on the villages and farms and bits of woodland, the advance was across open country against only slight enemy resistance.

By noon, Brancourt and Premont were in our hands, and the line was running diagonally across the Bohain-Premont-Cambrai road, with the enemy retiring rapidly, and putting up only rear guard actions with machine guns, burning buildings and supply and ammunition dumps.

At five in the evening, the 6th British Division had taken Bohain; the 30th American Division was occupying Busigny and Becquigny, while, to the west of Busigny, the 30th was astride the western circuit of the enemy's most important railway line,—that which ran from Metz to Mezieres and Hirson to Valenciennes and Lille.

By October 10th, the 25th British Division was advancing on the left, the 6th British Division was a slight distance behind on the right, and the attack was resumed. Escaufourt on the left, the western edges of Saint Souplet in the center, and Vaux-Andigny on the right were taken in this attack. Saint Souplet is situated on the west of the Selle River, and, on account of the favorable terrain in its vicinity, the enemy had established a resistance line on the hills east of the river, at which point their reinforcements held up our advance.

However, on the 11th of October, Saint Souplet, Vaux-Andigny and Saint Benin were cleared, and the advance along the river continued. This advance would command the railway line parallel to the Selle, from St. Souplet to Le Cateau. Here the 27th Division relieved the 30th.

The 4th Army front had now penetrated far to the east of the desolate Somme Valley, and was now in the midst of scenes untouched by the devastating hands of war. There was green in abundance here. Green things grew in the fields and gardens, where the houses

still had roofs on them, and windows, and where the civilians lived the lives of normal human beings.

In this peaceful valley, the 27th lay still for a couple of days, waiting for guns, supplies and ammunition, which had been lost in the dash, to come up. Then, on October 16th, having rested for a few days, and having reorganized its forces, the 30th Division returned to the line, taking over the right half of the 27th Division's sector. This gave each division a frontage of only about 2,000 yards, thereby giving the driving power of each division a decidedly greater punch. It was evidenced that here the enemy would resist stubbornly, for there was disposed in line, five complete divisions, as well as elements of six others in reserve areas.

On October 17th, at 5.25 A.M., through a drizzling rain and heavy, low-hanging mists, under cover of their barrage, the attack was resumed by the two American divisions. Heavy counter-barrage fire was laid down by the enemy, as well as greatly increased machine gun fire. Despite resistance, however, and the slippery, chalky soil, the men of the 27th Division waded through the river, climbed the opposite bank and pushed doggedly forward into the mists. As practically all of the bridges had been destroyed by the enemy, the 102d Engineers, advancing just behind the first wave of the attack, threw hastily-constructed bridges across the river, and the 105th and 108th Infantry Regiments

soon were successfully assaulting the heights beyond.

The enemy losses were heavy, and fourteen hundred prisoners, large quantities of munitions and railroad stock were taken.

The feat of fording the stream, climbing the slippery banks on the opposite side, and scaling the embankment of the railway, just beyond St. Souplet, in the face of the galling enemy fire, was almost unbelievable. Yet it was done.

Fourteen tanks, part of the 301st American Tank Battalion, having crossed the river to the north of St. Souplet, preceded the attacking waves of the 27th Division, whose left had been held up by the difficulty experienced by the 25th British Division in breaking through the little triangle formed by the railway line south of Le Cateau. But, nevertheless, the front of the 27th Division was pushed over the ridge, taking Molain on the right and establishing their lines through the positions in Arbre de Guise. And this in spite of the fact that both their flanks were drawn backward for liaison with the other divisions.

The advancing forces were now encountering especially heavy artillery fire and the enemy were launching several strong counters, which evidenced that they were forced to resist strongly to cover their further withdrawal of their heavy artillery. They had been surprised by the resumption of the attacks.

On the 18th of October, the 27th Division again attacked, with the 13th Corps (British), encountering heavy machine gun resistance from the farms on the slopes ahead, as well as counter-attacks supported by enemy artillery. But, at noon, the 30th Division, after obstinate fighting for Ribeauville, took that town, after heavy artillery preparation, and, by mid-afternoon, the enemy resistance had so far weakened as to allow the whole front to push forward to the next line of hills, which lay about two miles from the Canal de Sambre, and in the vicinity of the town of Catillon. As the moonlight, cold and clear, came to throw its lengthening shades over the battle-fields, it looked down upon the men of the 30th Division occupying Mazingheim (between Ribeauville and Catillon) assisted by flank attacks by the 27th Division from the north. The 27th took Jonc de Mer Farm and La Roux Farm, crossing Jonc de Mer brook and the ridge and pushing forward almost to the ridge west of the St. Maurice River.

On October 19th patrols were pushed forward toward the Canal de Sambre, all along the front, those of the 27th Division, reaching the western bank of the St. Maurice River, while those of the 30th Division reached the last ridge west of Catillon and the Canal.

Artillery and other necessary preparations were now begun for the next great organized attack, which had for its purpose the crossing of the Canal de Sambre and the St. Maurice

River. But, as the 27th and 30th American Divisions were not in condition to be used longer without a rest, and having become critically reduced by losses and fatigue they were relieved, on the 21st of October, by the 6th British Division, which took over the sector of the 27th, and the 1st British Division, taking over that of the 30th, during the night. The 27th and 30th Divisions now were drawn back to the vicinity of Amiens for a rest.

In its battle from September 29th to October 21st, the Second American Corps had advanced a total of about twenty miles, taken about one-tenth of the prisoners of the A. E. F.

From this point the British forces of the 6th and 1st Division pushed the enemy forward for a distance of about twenty-five miles beyond the Sambre, and, when the signing of the armistice called a halt to the hostilities all along the front, it found them just within the frontier of Belgium.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Yankee Soldier.

And so it was that the American doughboy in France, "came, saw, and conquered" everything before him. And, then, when his work was done, he was compelled to stay in France many weary months, while others argued and made speeches on Leagues of Nations and peace conferences and the like,—seemingly having forgotten the men who made those things possible.

And the Yankee soldier did some kicking, and no one on earth could blame him for doing so either. He was entitled to grumble. Of his deeds, they are already history. Of himself, on the line or in the rest areas, he was an American,—that is all—a big, reliant, fearless, splendid American. He did every job that was asked of him and did it right. He played hard and he fought hard. He went into a fight with as brave a heart as God ever placed in human breast, and with a smile on his face he passed down into the Valley of the Shadow. He was the finest soldier in Europe, and there are scores of great soldiers of all nations who will attest the veracity of this statement, and have done so already. Sam Browne belts were not popular with him. Some of his officers, newly come to their rank, were not equal to their

tasks, but he always was. He was always and simply,—the little old fighting private!

By his sublime courage, his unfailing optimism and his abiding faith that nothing could withstand the United States of America, he smashed through every obstacle, and would have gone to Berlin, had not the Armistice stopped his victorious advance. As one "scrap of paper" had been Germany's downfall, so another scrap of paper saved her from reaping the whirlwind she had started.

Of this we are certain. Never again will any nation which saw the American soldier in action, challenge him without a realization of what the challenge means.

If you had been with him, lived with him and fought beside him, and been through hell with him, and had seen him turn up at every turn with a grin, then you would have come to know him, as I have known him.

Have you ever stopped to think that he has faced the Great Unknown so much that it holds no fear for him? That he knows what glory means, when it is mixed with mud and blood and the suffering and death and fighting of the nerve-wracking days and nights in the line? Do you know that he has slept in the slush and mud and rain and still sang or whistled a tune of rag-time as the great guns barked and tore the heavens with their flashes? Do you know that he has lived upon a single meal a day, and kept on singing the lilting tunes of the home-town cabaret? Do you know that, perhaps, he

has fallen many times in the dark with limp, still things all around him? And then, at the hospital, called the nurse "kid" and begged her to help him get back to that sort of life again? Did you ever hike a hundred miles and carry your house on your back, while your feet were blistered and sore, and your shoulders were cut by the pack-straps? Did you ever live in the rain and snow and the cold, and eat your meals with your plate in your lap? I have marched along dusty French roads,—only one of a million American lads,—all so very much alike after all,—spirits as keen as a fresh flash of flame,—ready to strike whenever the chance might come to them, as come it would. Just a bunch of lads, with boyish grins,—waiting the chance to hustle into the fight,—thrilled by the battle and the din and crash of the guns. Tramping along through the darkness; splashing along through the mud and rain, with a pack chafing our backs,—bound for the trenches again! Watching the flashes of light in the distance and the splotches of red in the sky; hearing now and then the scream of a shell bursting in a convoy creeping along the road to the right. Tramping along,—rain in our faces and running icy cold down our backs,—silent and thoughtful,—forever moving forward,—bound for the lines again!

The first crimson streaks of coming dawn appear in the eastern heavens; and the pock-marked fields begin to come out of the misty

morning, that chills one to the very bone. Like a silvery thread the river cuts a winding course through the green and brown of its banks.

And yet, how very quiet and lonely the whole land is! Only the dead men whose distorted bodies lie along the roadways or hang upon the great tangles of the wire before the old battered trenches, live in this beautiful land. And what a multitude of shallow graves are in the fields,—some of them are marked by crosses, others only by a single stick with its tiny metal tag upon it, and still others by the owner's rifle, its bayonet driven point down into the soil, and its occupant's bloodstained helmet hanging from its bolt. Graves, singly or in twos or threes or clusters,—as they fell.

And yet we pass thousands of human beings,—clad in blue,—the immortal horizon-blue of heroic France. And we think of his long vigil,—we try to place our few short days of fighting and hell beside his four years and more; and we fall to wondering whether his home has been destroyed as those are before us, and thank God that the fighting and destruction and suffering and death and sacrifice is all so far away from our own dear homes and the loved ones back there; that our little cottage,—a cosy, snug little affair, with its roses and gardens and the children and mother and dad, and perhaps the wife or sweetheart,—is still there,—just as cosy and warm, and the folks just as sweet as

when we left them, in the budding springtime. And we wonder if we, too, shall be returning to them all once again, after this terrible nightmare of fighting is all over,—or,—or whether we shall soon be nestled snugly in one of those little green mounds of sacred French soil, like those in the field nearby?

And then, almost as if by some sort of a pre-arranged plan, someone in the column strikes up the familiar tune, and we all sing as we tramp onward:

"Keep your head down, Fritzie boy,
Keep your head down, Fritzie boy.
Last night, by the star-shell light
We saw you, we saw you.
You were mending your broken wire,
When we opened our rapid fire.
If you want to see your father in your
Fatherland,
Keep your head down, Fritzie boy."

Shall we ever forget those scenes we saw, as we slogged along the weary miles that led to the front? Loud spitting motor trucks and great trains of wagons, and caissons and guns, and weary tramping men,—all jammed into one seemingly conglomerate mass,—plodding along in the darkness and mud and rain of France, moving toward the front.

And night after night, always came the same sights,—nights of hard and never-ceasing work and marching,—days of toil over maps and battle plans; one or two hours' sleep,—at least we called it sleep,—in every

twenty-four, just a wink now and then, as chance or circumstance permitted,—until we lost all trace or semblance of time-reckoning. Day meant nothing but toil and working over maps and plans again, and night meant nothing but dull tramping onward through seas of mud and tangled masses of humans and guns and caissons and rain, pushed here and there by the passing of the huge camions and lorries laden with the food for the great guns that were flashing out just ahead of us,—calling us onward to the land of heroes, fighting and death, perhaps. Life had resolved itself into nothing but mud and rain and weary men and guns.

Weary, did I say? Well, some weary too! but nevertheless, always singing. And what did we sing?—"Dixie" and "Where Do We Go from Here,"—"The Last Long Mile," and many of those weary, muddy French roads were covered to the tune of:

"There's a long, long trail a-winding
Into the land of my dreams."

But, now we have returned again!

To get back home, again, and to see there old friends and faces of long vanished days; to hear some friendly voice call out from the old familiar streets or oft-remembered places, which we trod in the days of youth, before the red days of 1914. To get back home again, where rain and sunshine is abundant; where the lights of home hold up their golden shield, with its soft, warm arms of welcome, from

out the long ago, waiting to welcome us from the fields of France.

To get back home again,—to know at last the guns are silent from Flanders to Lorraine; the days of marching through the mud are past, the nights of terror in the driving rains of France, lie hidden in the midst of the Argonne glades,—all of it a grim, yet holy specter of our dreams,—of the years that wait ahead of us, where every shadow lifts before the smile of loved ones that welcome through their tears.

To get back home again,—to see the purple twilights and sunsets of the native land,—beyond the black shadows and misty dawns still filled with ghosts and death,—beyond the dreamless sleep of those who wait to hold the line they fought for to the end,—eternal sentinels at Freedom's Gate!

"And only silent thoughts of those who stay
To hold the guard across the endless years,
Who will not come again the ancient way."

Above the broken walls, the apple-boughs of the French springtime are murmurous with bees; again the breezes of coming "Printemps" whirl the drifting chestnut-flowers, and the little ruffling winds will soon be going merrily through the poplar trees; and though we are now far, far away in our homeland, we shall know that once again the spring has come to France.

Soon again the blood-red poppies shall bloom in the wheatfields; the rains of spring

gleam along the boulevards, and the flower-girls, with mignonette and pinks and clematis shall come again to sell their wares in Paris streets; the Seine, slipping under the pretty bridges to the sea,—and the west; and out in the countryside of the beautiful Yonne Valley, shall shine the pale golden smile of the buttercups, that glorifies the gray ruins with bravery heartbreaking and valiant,—the smile that lights the eyes of France! And beyond the dark days of the past, we have seen, not the worn, steadfast France,—wan, gallant, spent, with eyes burned haggard by the spirit of the Maid of Orleans and Charlotte of Normandy,—but France, triumphant, high of heart, smiling through throbbing drums,—on Reims restored, Nancy and Alsace-Lorraine, in this new spring that comes,—the spring the halt and blind and dead and the rest of us who fought, have brought again to France!

CHAPTER IX.

To Our Dead!

When our glasses are raised in the many happy fetes that shall crown the homecoming of the fighters; when the cheeks of the victors are flushed with the new joys of the homeland; and when the Cup of Life seems filled to its fullest measure with the joy of living once more in the peaceful land of our nativity; let us then drink, deep and long,—those of us who shall tread again the undisturbed pathway of life,—let us drink to those who gave their Wine of Life that the world might once again enjoy the sunshine of Peace, and whose souls hallow the stretches of the Argonne and the silent wastes of Picardy.

They are sleeping where they fell, along our lines; placed in their narrow cots of earth by the hands of loving and sorrowing comrades! Beside the gaping shell-craters of Thiaucourt, and upon the bloody slopes of the Bois de Belleau and the bald Nose of Grand Pre; sleeping quietly the last sleep of the brave, among the poppied fields of France.

How silently they rest beneath their tiny wooden crosses! Hearing no more the roar of guns that once belched their thunder of

death across the barren wastes of No Man's Land; unmindful of the sweet songs of the birds among the bursting buds and blossoms of spring, in the apple orchards of Picardy.

How bravely and gallantly they marched away,—that other generations, as yet unborn, might possess the fruits of their suffering and death,—that the heritage of happiness for which they fought and bled should bless the whole earth. What a glorious martyrdom! Baring their bosoms freely, rather than have the flag of their country dishonored and her name reviled; their breasts the bulwark and the fortress of right and justice, upon which the temple of Freedom should be raised in the sight of all nations.

It was not our privilege to die for the land that we love. But when are met the loyal hosts of those who fought,—around that board shall ring the glasses, raised in memory of our hero dead! Not even death itself shall utterly divide we who have struggled together on the fields of France. We salute our hero dead!—Dead upon the Field of Honor for the nation in the hour of her need! Our banners carry the glorious names of Cantigny, Bois de Belleau, Torcy, Chateau-Thierry, Marne, Champagne, Saint Mihiel and Argonne, and many others,—stars in America's crown of glory,—names which they who died upon those fields have written in letters of purest gold upon the crown of the country which sent them forth!

Let us here offer our last, supreme homage of gratitude and affection,—would it might have been beside those freshly-dug graves upon the slopes of the Argonne, where they rest in the shadow of the Tricolor of France, beside all the brave fellows, whose deeds they have emulated,—justly entitled to be counted among the illustrious dead of the ages,—America's sacrifice upon the Altar of Freedom!

Lads of the Golden Legion, we who knew you, worked with you, ate with you, slept with you, and fought beside you, salute you as we pass the spot where you lie. Our breath comes faster, our hearts beat stronger, and our eyes grow dim with the tears of comrades, as we pass the spot, but we pass on, better and stronger men. Your bodies alone, torn by the merciless hands of the enemy, have gone from amongst us; your souls, long since gone to the Great White Comrade still hover over us; your memory remains in our hearts,—imperishable, shining and tender.

Laddies, we who have returned to the land of our fathers, salute you!—Farewell!

THE HOMECOMING.

From the squelching mud of Flanders,
From the Chateau-Thierry wheat,
From the shattered Halles of Ypres,
From where Scarpe and Escaut meet,
From the shell-strewn slopes of Verdun,
Comes the tramp of marching feet,
For the boys are coming home.

Ye who sat in the twilight when the light of
your homes was gone,
Who wearily watched and waited till the
day when the war was done,
What will ye think on the day when they all
come back, who can,
And the boy you sent with a mother's tears
returns, but returns a man.

Browned by the suns of foreign climes, with
the lines of fate in his face,
The lines of men who have fought with men
in many a fearful place,
Men who have looked old death in the face
and laughed as he passed them by,
But, "Where is the boy I gave to you?" I
can hear the mothers cry.

Oh, mother, thy son has come back to thee,
tempered and tried like steel,
In the flaming fire of the hell of war where
the charging legions reel.
Where the rocket gleams on the bayonet
(where it is not dyed with red),
And the fitful glare of the Verey flare lights
up the face of the dead.

He has seen men die with a smile on their lips
that the nations might be free.
He has charged the foe with his blood on fire
and has seen the foeman flee.
And mother, the boy who thus passed through
hell can be no longer a boy.
For the ore of Man in that furnace tried is
metal without alloy.

And to those whose sons have tarried awhile,
asleep in their Mother Earth,
Whose brave young souls have barred the
foe from the land that gave them birth,
I say to them "Weep," for weep they must,
but hold up their heads, as they can,
For the boy they gave at the Nation's call
has gone to his rest, a man.

From the squelching mud of Flanders,
From the Chateau-Thierry wheat,
From the shattered Halles of Ypres,
From where Scarpe and Escaut meet,
From the shell-strewn slopes of Verdun,
Comes the tramp of marching feet,
For the men are coming home.

James Beveridge, Sgt. M. C.,
First printed in "Stars and Stripes," France.

[FINIS.]

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: MAY 2001
Preservation Technologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 007 690 834 5